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Horizon

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

Irish Number

PATRICK KAVANAGH

M. J. MacMANUS

L. T. MURRAY

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SIR KENNETH CLARK

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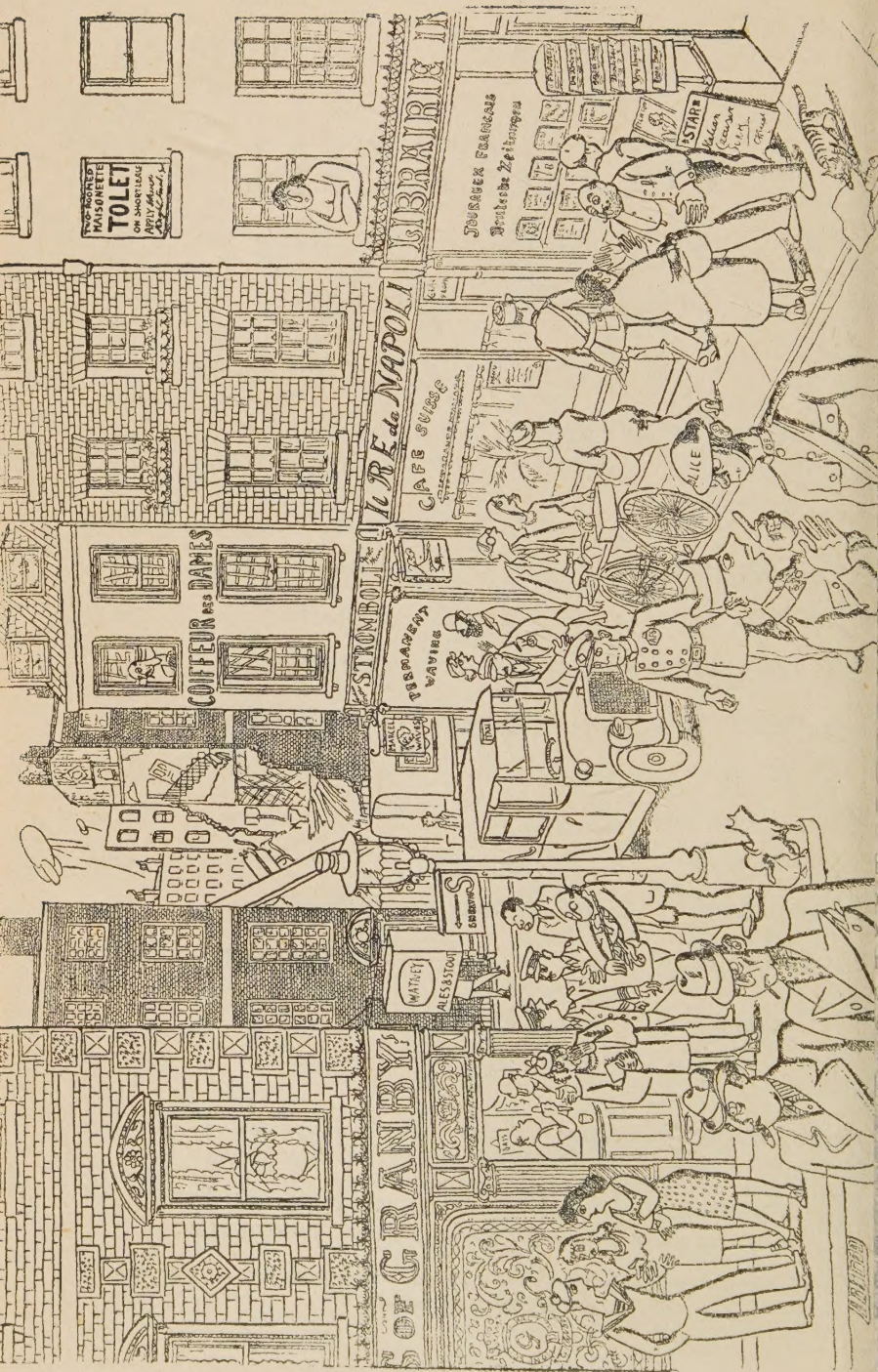
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COMMENT

IN presenting an Irish number, *Horizon* is concerned not with propaganda but with giving a truthful picture of contemporary Eire as it is seen by Irish writers. But in one way this number is propaganda. I met with some anti-British feeling in Ireland, where it was the expression of a sense of past injustice. I have met with far more prejudice, ignorance and impatience since returning, and if this number dispels a little of the boredom and incomprehension with which the Irish problem is regarded, then the picture will have been not only true but useful.

There are two points at which the affairs of Ireland touch the immediate problems of to-day: through the political issue of neutrality and through the cultural issue of nationalism.

Nobody should express any views on Ireland till he has read some Anglo-Irish history. Nobody can read any Anglo-Irish history without being convinced by the Irish case. From Strongbow to the Black and Tans our record in Ireland is one of seven centuries of cruelty, injustice, intolerance and exploitation, with a few vacillating intervals of weakness and appeasement. From this reading of history one is reminded of another truth. Violence does not pay. Not that it lacks temporary successes—the Norman art of castle building kept them their strong points in Ireland against a more numerous enemy for centuries—but, in spite of superior weapons, violence does not pay because it requires, from generation to generation, a constant and aggressive use of the will to which human nature is not adapted. No nation can endure permanent unpopularity with its subject races, no nation can be consistently ruthless and so guard for ever against opposition from below and eruptions of remorse and uncertainty at the top.

Now the British policy of conciliation which has replaced the old one of coercion is beginning to bear fruit. When Mr. de Valera admitted that England had behaved 'not unworthily' in its relations with Eire since the war, he was paying a tribute which would have been inconceivable twenty years ago, and which may still forfeit some of his popularity today. The fact that we have been able to treat our neutral neighbour with tact and geniality in spite of the harassing effect of war is not only a

cause of better relations but a proof of the fundamental democracy of the empire, of a spirit utterly different and superior to that of Fascism. We fight a total war and we must employ total weapons, but we use them as a doctor makes use of a dangerous drug, by keeping a check on the poison bottle and without letting himself become an addict. Our temptation is to lose all patience with the Irish, to ride roughshod over that small, obstinate, intransigent nation with its head still buried in 1938—it is a temptation which must be resisted, or the sombre lesson of Kilmainham Gaol will have to be relearnt, and the virtue of twenty years of enlightened good neighbourship be undone. While we respect Eire's neutrality we can respect ourselves, its existence is the show-piece of the Empire's freedom.

The attitude of Eire to Britain is, and will remain for some time, suspicious. They feel especially bitter about the ports, for they are convinced that if they parted with them again, they would not only never get them back but be plunged immediately into the war, in which, owing to lack of anti-aircraft defences, they would severely suffer. In talking to Irishmen about relations with Britain I was constantly reminded of the attitude of emancipated children to their parents. Eire is the daughter, who after a bitter struggle with her family during which she used violence, cunning, and hunger-striking, has obtained her own latchkey and the right to come in and out when she likes. The parents, on the ground of illness and advancing years, promptly ask for it back—'just while Mums is sleeping so badly'. The daughter, remembering Kilmainham, will certainly refuse. Eventually, however, her freedom will pall, especially if Mums makes no more demands, but instead gives a series of delicious dinner parties without her.

The Ulster Question is more complicated. Here, again, it is clear that violence has not paid, and that, as the Carson generation pass away, new leaders will be more able to arrive at a settlement. But it is from Ulster that the desire must come. No British Government could saddle itself with another 'Great Betrayal', and until a majority in Ulster wishes to unite with Eire it would be poor democracy to compel them to do so, and would start another civil war in a country whose population is unable to bear one, besides presenting Eire with the last remaining bases, the tender spots on our western carotid artery. One gets the

impression in Eire that the Ulster problem is not quite as pressing as it is made to sound, partly because its acquisition would make the Protestant minority really powerful (for which reason it is desired by Southern Protestants), partly because, as an Anglo-Irish leader put it, 'Ulster is a liability: it has never really paid its way, and the Irish Government can't afford it'. Anyhow it should in the fullness of time fall into Southern Ireland's national and geographical lap, though Eire's present economic autarchy is hardly tempting.

The Ulster problem leads on to the second great issue which is coming to a head in Ireland—that of Economics *v.* Nationalism. Ireland is the most nationalist of the new states because she is the most isolated. At the moment she is closest by inclination to the other Western theocratic dictator-republic, Dr. Salazar's Portugal. Ireland has, however, no empire, very few industries and no ships. Mr. de Valera has staked the national pride of the new State on the development of the Gaelic language and traditions, the authority of the Catholic Church, and the development of state-aided industries. Of these two run counter to the natural geographical and economic destiny of the island, for Ireland is essentially agricultural, the dairy farm and horse pasture of Europe, with a position on the great Anglo-American air-routes of the future which should bring to it the material benefits, the political system, and the language of the Atlantic peoples of the great post-war State—The Anglo-American-Sino-Soviet-Union. Against this destiny Mr. de Valera rebels in the name of Nationalist, Racial, Religious and Spiritual values, and he is so far able to resist it because he has three-quarters of the opinion, and all the prejudice of the country behind him. But as national feelings die down and economic needs increase there will be a reaction. There are already signs of a new and cynical generation growing up, who care little for Irish nationalism or for the pride and discomfort of Autarchy. The most acute criticism of Mr. de Valera to which I listened came from an Anglo-Irish lady who said that, by seeking to industrialize Eire, he had taken on an impossible task, while if he had accepted it as an agricultural state and concentrated on the intensive and scientific development of its agriculture, as in Denmark, he would have made it a wealthy country. This would involve, however, forcing collective and co-operative principles on a nation of small farmers

and peasants who would be opposed to it, nor would the Church welcome such disruption of the family. Meanwhile the predicament is serious. The shops are full of good things to eat, the streets of people who cannot afford to buy them. Light and heat are desperately short, for there is very little coal, and turf is scarce through lack of transport. The coal ration is three-eighths of a ton per two months, unless one is in a district where turf is compulsory, and that costs 64s. per ton and burns badly. Doctors and Government inspectors have less petrol than the English motorist, the great country houses have their bath night once a week, bread is rationed, tea and coffee are very scarce, trains run slowly on inferior fuel, the Archbishop of Dublin has inaugurated free soup kitchens, an army is training without modern equipment, and even the Gaelic is slipping. Round Dublin the days of the unheatable, servantless Great House are finished. The New Society of Government officials have moved to trim little houses in the suburbs, where they are visited by the secretaries of the legations—the new aristocracy. And emigration—the silent indictment of a civilization which no censor can suppress—continues to threaten its human resources.

This is a black picture, but it is important for the English reader to stop thinking of Ireland as an uncharitable earthly paradise. A further reading of this number should disillusion him. An autarchic state who wishes its artists to be loyal should subsidize them. For the writers and artists of Ireland are particularly the victims of the Economic-*v.*-National dilemma. There is no state patronage of the Arts in Eire, nor is there any rich and cultivated patron class. Writers (and painters) must depend for their income (unless they have the happy best-selling temperament of Maurice Walsh) on sales in the U.S.A. and England. Their ecology is unsound—a population of three and a half millions cannot support very many intellectuals, and this generates something of the famous Dublin bitterness. [‘When I left Dublin, I left no society that did not disgust me.’—Shaw. ‘No sooner does any man attempt or achieve, here, anything fine than the rats begin to emerge from the sewers, bringing with them a skunk-like stench of envy and hatred, worse than the drip of a broken drain.’—O’Fáolain.] And yet, owing to the limited appeal of Gaelic and the impatience of the outside world with the national religion of neutrality it is difficult for the English and U.S.A. public to be tapped. Hence a

tendency to libel actions as compensation among the more unscrupulous. The nightingales are silent, scuffling for the imported worm.

Such are some aspects of the Irish problem—a problem not so unlike our own. How will it be solved? The I.R.A. extremists believe with the tommy gun and a German invasion. The Anglo-Irish, who feel that England is paying the price for its abandonment, after the last war, of the aristocratic qualities of the Iron Hand and personal honour, are either despondent or inclined to believe that Ireland may become (not under Mr. de Valera) the last conservative country in Europe. Yet everything depends on that astonishing man himself. For he is the democratically chosen leader of Ireland, the only figure in the country who is above envy, whose place no one wishes to take, whose personal integrity even by his enemies is never questioned. To meet him is to be at once aware of a deep far-sighted humane and intellectual statesman (with a physical resemblance to T. S. Eliot!).

To meet Mr. de Valera is the most impressive thing one can do in Eire, to talk to his aide, Mr. Gallagher, is one of the pleasantest. He is the author of a moving book, *Days of Fear* (John Murray), which describes his sensations on hunger strike against the British and believes that no great decisions should be taken without the lucidity obtained by fasting. To talk with Mr. de Valera and his advisers, like Mr. Sean MacEntee, Frank Gallagher, or Mr. Walsh, is to realize how widely read, how philosophical, how deeply religious and European their minds are. These men whom the British once hounded through the mountains, or sentenced to execution in Mountjoy Gaol, are now at the head of affairs, singularly without rancour, fortified by their humanity and aptitude for meditation and historical thought.

Those are some aspects of Eire to-day—but I have left the two most prominent to the last: the charm of its inhabitants and the beauty of its monuments and countryside. Fortunate is the visitor who can see both under the guidance of John Betjeman. When the flying coffin from the gloomy Midlands whisks one away from the present everything is a pleasure. The airport is a gem of modern architecture, the Customs are polite, the season less advanced, the air milder, the trees greener. There are blue mountains on the horizon lost in soft cloud, and a gay bus which cuts through the northern approaches past shops full of eggs and

hams and onions and marmalade, past hanging joints, and streets without uniforms.

Dublin, disengaged from the fabulous embrace of Joyce, is a capital city. In a fortnight I saw one German, they are no more common than bears in Switzerland, but there is much bustle in Government offices and foreign legations. Stephen's Green is exquisite, a Continental 'jardin public' with an indefinable air of romance and excitement, and the Liffey, with its quays, its painted houses, its estuary, and the evening reflections of street lights in the water is utterly foreign. Among the northern slums lurk many haggard and austere buildings, which include the lovely baroque plaster work of the Rotunda Chapel, and the Marino Casino of Clontarf, one of those temples which, like Vicenza or the Amalienberg, move one to tears, and illustrate Spinoza's axiom 'Laetificatio Perfectio est'. Apart from such buildings the most beautiful thing I saw was the view gained by taking the bus to Killiney. One climbs a promontory where one looks back over the harbour of Dunleary to the domes of eighteenth-century Dublin, the strand of Joyce's Martello tower, the plateau of Phoenix Park, the mouth of the Liffey, the sacred hill of Howth, and turning round, faces to the south. Here one seems to have travelled through many degrees of latitude. The wide uninhabited beaches of Bray and Killiney curve southwards under a warmer air, the well-wooded valleys of Powerscourt and Enniskerry lap up over the foothills and expire in the interstices of the two Sugarloaves. The blending of woods and fields with the shore and the moorland, the contours of the distant mountains dappled with sun and cloud, are like a coloured print of a plantation in the West Indies, the feeling for landscape which has lain buried through two years of war and journalism wells over. It is time to return.

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'I have fought these people, I have arrested those who are now their leaders, I have opposed their governments,' said one of the last of the great Anglo-Irish landlords, 'but I have never found a people more charming to deal with—there is one thing any Englishman can learn here, and that is how to grease the wheels of life with civility.' This charm does not spring from any deep desire to soothe or ingratiate, but is no more than

the natural currency of an unindustrialized country where the individual still counts. Irish manners, Spanish manners, Oriental manners but proceed from the conception, obsolete elsewhere, that man is a human being. Ireland, indeed, is in danger of becoming the last stronghold of the minor personality, the snob with his red skin, flashing eye, signet rings, luxuriant names and patter, or the misunderstood genius or the old Anarcho-Uncontrollable, like Frank O'Connor's Patriot—The 'Wan Man That was Trew'.

Irish society still puts an eighteenth-century value on wine, conversation or sport, kept apart from the women. Perhaps the one most remarkable male stronghold is the Palace Bar.

The Palace Bar is a small back room in a pleasant tavern which is frequented entirely by writers and journalists; it is as warm and friendly as an alligator tank, its inhabitants, from a long process of mutual mastication, have a leathery look, and are as witty, hospitable and kindly a group as can be found anywhere. The Palace Bar is perhaps the last place of its kind in Europe, a *Café Littéraire*, where one can walk in to have an intelligent discussion with a stranger, listen to Scumas O'Sullivan on the early days of Joyce, or discuss the national problem with the giant Hemingway-sque editor of the *Irish Times*. Here one may also gather varieties of anti-British opinion, and see the war as a bored spectator, as a pro-Pétain intellectual Catholic, as a pro-German anti-semitic Kerryman, as an Anglo-Irish Protestant disillusioned with England since the 'Great Betrayal', as an ardent de Valera supporter anxious to preserve the young nation from the raging epidemic, yet determined to resist any invader, as a realist who doesn't want Eire to 'blot her copy book' and who says 'we are very sorry for you, but we don't think you are going to win', as a sour man who says 'To think I have lived to see the liquidation of the British ruling class', as a superior Trotskyite 'Flyboy' (as the English expatriates of military age are called), or simply as a fuddled philosopher with a glass in front of him.

The Palace Bar is a cultural excrescence. At the opposite pole is Maynooth, the spiritual heart of the country, the largest priests' college in Europe, where eight years of training in the severe and magnificent Gothic buildings mould the priesthood who depart to rule the towns and villages. I lunched with the priests who taught English literature, and who were learned in Auden and Spender, and heard Father Browne, who is also an eminent

physicist, read Yeats's Easter Week poem in his beautiful voice. The turf fire burning, the Sunday afternoon silence in the great quadrangle where the clock keeps a different time from all secular Ireland, the rows of books on literature, history and theology, the priests listening spellbound in their robes and this huge man reading

I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth-century houses. . . .

made an unforgettable picture of the religious patriotic Ireland, whose priests seemed almost to admit a momentary doubt of their vocation, as the voice went rolling on

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice? . . .

In discussing the war with Irishmen, several have put forward the theory that it is a judgment on a sinful Europe—one of our hosts at Maynooth, however, went so far as to say it was a direct result of the Pelagian heresy, which he said was the heresy of England and America, and consisted of the exaltation of the human will. The more I think over this the more I think he is right. The one thing which is common to England, the U.S.A., Germany, Russia, and Fascist Italy, is their complete belief in the human will. The war is a clash of national will-power. This is a tragedy, I do not think it is a heresy. The belief in the will, which is the heritage of Rome and Greece, is the greatest possible force for change and progress. The intelligent use of our will is the exercise to which Western man is best fitted. His evolution lies that way, and when Germany is defeated the victors must live intelligently by their will or perish. I listened to many anti-British opinions in Ireland. The reader may wonder how I answered them; I explained that it was absurd to keep asking me if I thought England was going to win the war, and smile knowingly if I said yes: the English were concerned with fighting the war, even more than with winning it. I had once been anti-British myself and ashamed of it. Municking rulers; it was therefore with all the more joy that I found that new leaders whom I admired were now able to make changes

Biologically a nation like England must fight or go under: if it was defeated it must still fight, it had no more choice than a bull in a *Corrida*. We once tried to buy our way out, now we have accepted our destiny; if we are really a decadent country we will be defeated, history is finished with us; if not, we are only beginning to take our place as a great European power. Ireland has chosen to pass her hand; she may become an example to us all, or slide into a Western Mount Athos. England has staked everything and must be ruined or sweep the pool. Returning to England, in fact, from the lovely island of 1938, with its lights and its crowds, its huge trees and cloudscapes, its shops full of food, and newspapers full of nothing, and its wise ruler struggling with the insoluble problem of the future of small nations, is not unlike going back from Southern France to the Spanish war. The examination in the field, the soldier with a revolver who goes through one's letters, the official with his questions, recall Port-Bou; the long, dark,abby train with blacked-out windows or rifle-cluttered corridor carries one back to reality, to the five-year sentence in gregarious confinement which we are all serving. I thought of my friends in Dublin, their kindness and intelligence, their attitude of mingled curiosity and pity, together with a kind of uneasiness about their neutrality, like the uneasiness behind the landscape, behind the bluff at sunset, or the street-markets lit up in the rainy evenings. Are the wisest people in the world those who have kept their calendar at 1938? Has everyone else gone mad? Who are right, those who cling obstinately to peace, their hard-won convalescence, or we who feel that, until we know what we are prepared to die for, we are not fully alive?

C. C.

PATRICK KAVANAGH

THE OLD PEASANT

I

CLAY is the word and clay is the flesh
Where the potato-gatherers like mechanized scarecrows move
Along the side-fall of the hill—Maguire and his men.
If we watch them an hour is there anything we can prove
Of life as it is broken-backed over the Book
Of Death? Here crows squabble over worms and frogs
And the gulls like old newspapers are blown clear of the hedges
luckily.

Is there some light of imagination in these wet clods?
Or why do we stand here shivering?

Which of these men

Loved the light and the queen
Too long virgin? Yesterday was summer. Who was it promised
marriage to himself

Before apples were hung from the ceilings for Hallowe'en?
We will wait and watch the tragedy till the last curtain,
Till the last soul passively like a bag of wet clay
Rolls down the side of the hill diverted by the angles
Where the plough missed or a spade stands, straightening the way

A dog lying on a torn jacket under a heeled-up cart,
A horse nosing around the posied headland, trailing
A rusty plough. Three heads hanging between wide apart
Legs. October playing a symphony on a slack wire paling.

Maguire watches the drills flattened out
And the flints that lit a candle for him on a June altar
Flameless. The drills slipped by and the days slipped by
And he trembled his head away and ran free from the world
halter.

And thought himself wiser than any man in the townland
When he laughed over pints of porter
Of how he came free from every net spread

in the gaps of experience. He shook a knowing head
and pretended to his soul
That children are tedious in hurrying fields of April
Where men are spanging across wide furrows
lost in the passion that never needs a wife.
The pricks that pricked were the pointed pins of harrows.
Children scream so loud that the crows could bring
The seed of an acre away with crow-rude jeers.
Patrick Maguire he called his dog and he flung a stone in the air
and hallooed the birds away that were the birds of the years.
Turn over the weedy clods and tease out the skeins of experience.
What is he looking for there?
He thinks it is a potato, but we know better
than his mud-gloved fingers probe in this insensitive hair.

‘Move forward the basket and balance it steady
in this hollow. Pull down the shafts of that cart, Joe,
and straddle the horse,’ Maguire calls.
The wind’s over Brannagan’s now and that means rain.
Traip up some withered stalks and see that no potato falls
over the tail-board going down the ruckety pass—
and *that’s* a job we’ll have to do in December,
travel it and build a kerb on the bog-side. Is that Cassidy’s ass
out in my clover? Curse o’ God—
Where is that dog?
Never where he’s wanted.’ Maguire grunts and spits
through a clay-wattled moustache and stares about him from
the height.
His dream changes again like the cloud-swung wind
and he is not so sure now if his mother was right
When she praised the man who made a field his bride.
Watch him, watch him, that man on a hill whose spirit
a wet sack flapping about the kneecaps of time.
He lives that his little fields may stay fertile when his own body
spread in the bottom of a ditch under two coulter-crosses in
Christ’s Name.

He was suspicious in his youth as a rat near strange bread.
When girls laughed; when they screamed he knew that meant

The cry of fillies in season. He could not walk
 The easy road to his destiny. He dreamt
 The innocence of young brambles to hooked treachery.
 O the grip, O the grip of irregular fields! No man escapes.
 It could not be that back of the hills love was free
 And ditches straight.
 No monster hand lifted up children and put down apes
 As here.

‘O God if I had been wiser!’

That was his sigh like the brown breeze in the thistles.
 He looks towards his house and haggard. ‘O God if I had been
 wiser!’

But now a crumpled leaf from the whitethorn bushes
 Darts like a frightened robin, and the fence
 Shows the green of after-grass through a little window,
 And he knows that his own heart is calling his mother a liar.
 God’s truth is life—even the grotesque shapes of its foulest fire.

The horse lifts its head and cranes
 Through the whins and stones
 To lip late passion in the crawling clover.
 In the gap there’s a bush weighted with boulders like morality
 The fools of life bleed if they climb over.

The wind leans from Brannagan’s, and the coltsfoot leaves are
 holed with rust,
 Rain fills the cart-tracks and the sole-plate grooves;
 A yellow sun reflects in Donaghmoyné
 The poignant light in puddles shaped by hooves.

Come with me, Imagination, into this iron house
 And we will watch from the doorway the years run back,
 And we will know what a peasant’s left hand wrote on the page
 Be easy October. No cackle hen, horse neigh, tree sough, duck
 quack.

II

Maguire was faithful to death:
 He stayed with his mother till she died
 At the age of ninety-one.
 She stayed too long,

Wife and mother in one.

When she died

The knuckle-bones were cutting the skin of her son's backside
And he was sixty-five.

O he loved his mother

Above all others.

O he loved his ploughs

And he loved his cows

And his happiest dream

Was to clean his arse

With perennial grass

On the bank of some summer stream;

To smoke his pipe

In a sheltered gripe

In the middle of July—

His face in a mist

And two stones in his fist

And an impotent worm on his thigh.

But his passion became a plague

For imagination grew tired bringing the vague

Women of his mind to lust nearness,

Once a week at least flesh must make an appearance.

So Maguire got tired

Of the no-target gun fired

And returned to his headlands of carrots and cabbage

To the fields once again

Where eunuchs can be men

And life is more lousy than savage.

III

Poor Paddy Maguire, a fourteen-hour day

He worked for years. It was he that lit the fire

And boiled the kettle and gave the cows their hay.

His mother tall hard as a Protestant spire

Came down the stairs bare-foot at the kettle call

And talked to her son sharply: 'Did you let

The hens out, laziness?' She had a venomous drawl

And a wizened face like moth-eaten leatherette.
 Two black cats peeped between the banisters
 And gloated over the bacon-fizzling pan.
 Outside the window showed tin canisters.
 The snipe of dawn fell like a whirring stone
 And Patrick on a headland stood alone.

The pull is on the traces, it is March
 And a cold black wind is blowing from Dundalk.
 The twisting sod rolls over on her back—
 The virgin screams before the irresistible sock.
 No worry on Maguire's mind this day
 Except that he forgot to bring his matches.
 'Hop back there, Polly, hop back, woe, wae'
 From every-second hill a neighbour watches
 With all the sharpened interest of rivalry.
 Yet sometimes when the sun comes through a gap
 These men know God the Father in a tree;
 The Holy Spirit is the rising sap,
 And Christ will be the green leaves that will come
 At Easter from the sealed and guarded tomb.

Primroses and the unearthly start of ferns
 Among the blackthorn shadows in the ditch,
 A dead sparrow and an old waistcoat. Maguire learns
 As the horses turn slowly round the which is which
 Of love and fear and things half born to mind.
 He stands between the plough-handles and he sees
 At the end of a long furrow his name signed
 Among the poet's, prostitute's. With all miseries
 He is one. Here with the unfortunate
 Who for half moments of paradise
 Pay out good days and wait and wait
 For sunlight-woven cloaks. O to be wise
 As Respectability that knows the price of all things
 And marks God's truth in pounds and pence and farthings.

IV

April, and no one able to calculate
 How far is it to harvest. They put down

The seeds blindly with sensuous groping fingers,
And sensual sleep dreams subtly underground.
To-morrow is Wednesday—who cares?
Remember Eileen Farrelly? I was thinking
A man might do a damned sight worse.' That voice is blown
Through a hole in a garden wall
And who was Eileen now cannot be known.

The cattle are out on grass,
The corn is coming up evenly.
Who will ask philosophy of the folk running to Mass?
They will meet at the end of the world, the slow and the speedier.

Maguire knelt beside a pillar where he could spit
Without being seen. He turned an old prayer round:
Jesus, Mary and Joseph pray for us
Now and at the hour of our death. . .
Wonder should I cross-plough that turnip-ground?
The tension broke. The congregation lifted its head
As one creature and coughed in unison.
Five hundred hearts were hungry for life—
Who lives in Christ shall never die the death.
Maguire sprinkled his face with holy water
As the congregation stood up for the Last Gospel.
He rubbed the dust off his knees with his palm and then
Coughed the prayer-phlegm up from his throat and sighed: Amen.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

PATRICK KAVANAGH has just written a second novel. *The Old Peasant* is a long poem of thirty pages, of which only the beginning is here given. M. J. MACMANUS is the leader writer of the *Irish Press* and a bibliophile. T. L. MURRAY is, of course, the publicist. T. H. WHITE's letter is an extract from his journal; SEÁN O'FAOLAIN is editor of *The Bell*; FRANK O'CONNOR, a poet and Gaelic scholar. EDWARD SHEEHY is a young Dublin writer. Sir KENNETH CLARK is Director of the National Gallery.

M. J. MACMANUS

EIRE AND THE WORLD CRISIS

SINCE the war began many cultivated Englishmen have visited Ireland: to them—in a famous phrase—‘a small country that we know nothing about.’ Most of them have come with the best possible intentions and the worst possible equipment: an education received at English public schools. All of them are anxious to discover why, in this crisis of civilization, more than three-quarters of Ireland should, with an unparalleled demonstration of unity, have adopted a neutral position. They strive to make sure that, during their visit, they will meet more than the ‘right’ people, who, they suspect, may easily prove to be the wrong people. In Dublin, if they have lunched in the decayed die-hard Tory atmosphere of the Kildare Street Club, they may adjust things in the evening by drinking beer with poets and writers in the back-room of the Palace Bar.

They look for Fascism and they fail to find it. They look for hostility to Britain and they find little or none. The one thing they do find is that people are almost aggressively neutral. Nobody in Eire (one may as well employ that convenient but wrongly-used word), they soon come to realize, is in the least anxious to plunge the country into war for ‘a democratic civilization’, for ‘the defence of Christianity’, for ‘the English way of living’, or, in fact, for any of those ideals which are the current coin of British propaganda. The people of Eire have little faith in British democracy; they prefer the Irish to the English way of living; they cannot, by any stretch of imagination, bring themselves to regard Britain as the sole champion of international good sportsmanship or as the saviour of small nations; and, so far from regarding the present European struggle as a holy crusade by Britain and her Allies against the Powers of Darkness, they suspect it is nothing more than a clash between two imperialisms. All of which is hurtful to the English visitor’s pride and in direct conflict with what he has been taught to believe.

The week or two which he spends in Dublin will be all too

short to clear his mind of prejudices and preconceived ideas or to give him the insight into Irish history and psychology which he failed to acquire at Rugby or Harrow. Yet he cannot be here long, if he is of an intelligent and exploratory turn of mind, before he realizes that he is in a country which never forgets that it has experienced six centuries of oppression and only twenty years of freedom; a country where men under forty retain vivid memories of the time when Cork City bore a striking resemblance to the Ypres of 1918; a country that still bears on its face many of the scars of the long years of oppression. Then, with a start, the honest Englishman may remember that it was *his* country, *his* governing class, which were responsible for the invasion, plantations and famines of the six tragic centuries; that it was British Forces who burnt Cork and Balbriggan and Tuam twenty short years ago; that it was Britain who, after fifty-thousand Irishmen had died fighting her battles in the last war, gave Ireland the Black-and-Tans and the Terror as a reward.

If he probes a little further, however, the English visitor will discover that Ireland's attitude in the present world crisis is not based merely upon memories that rankle or upon any innate anti-Britishism. It rests upon something deeper and more abiding: on the right that every free nation, great or small, has, or should have, to control its own destinies and to determine its own policy in international affairs. No small nation has entered the present war of its own volition, and those who have been swept into it have not escaped any of its horrors through being afforded the 'protection' of a powerful belligerent. Irishmen feel the same about it. Their country has had more than enough 'history'; it badly needs a rest. It wants to live its life in peace, to stabilize its new-found institutions, to build up its young industries, to develop its native culture.

II

In all discussions about the war and neutrality, the English visitor will find that one name overshadows all others: that of Eamon de Valera. In Ireland it is unescapable, as unescapable as that of Churchill in England, Hitler in Germany, Roosevelt in the United States, Salazar in Portugal. Today that tall, rugged-featured man, who looks less than his fifty-nine years, is the very symbol of Ireland's separateness and nationhood. At his call

250,000 young men have left their office and factory to join their country's defence ranks. The visitor may learn something of his romantic career, his unshakable integrity, his frugal manner of living, his unfailing personal charm. Somebody with a long memory may even recall how de Valera, when President of the League, warned the Assembly in an historic speech that all that has happened would happen if it did not put its house in order. 'There is a suspicion abroad that little more than lip service is being paid to the fundamental principles on which the League was founded. There is the suspicion that the action of the League can be paralysed by the pressure of powerful interests, and that if the hand raised against the Government is sufficiently strong it can strike with impunity.' Japan raised the strong hand against the Covenant in Manchukuo—and with impunity. But the voice that rang out in strong protest in Geneva was not that of the British delegate: it was that of Eamon de Valera; Sir John Simon was all for 'appeasement'. Useless for the Irish leader to declare that 'people felt the testing-time had come and they were watching to see if that test would reveal weakness.' De Valera's speech, said Reuter, 'was received in silence.' Abyssinia repeated the story. In spite of centuries-old ties between Italy and Ireland, de Valera supported Sanctions: Sir Samuel Hoare helped Laval to sabotage them.

Englishmen have probably forgotten de Valera's part in those episodes, episodes which have had such disastrous consequences for the world. But Irishmen have not forgotten, and if they are told today that they should be fighting in 'a war for democracy' they must be pardoned if they look back to a time—less than ten years ago—when 'democracy', firmly planted in the saddle, showed scant respect for democratic principles at Geneva. The word democracy, in fact, has lost much of its old potency in Ireland. When they hear it used, the people of Eire are apt to turn their gaze to the north-east corner of their island, where, in a territory smaller than Yorkshire, ruled from Whitehall, the investigations of the British Council of Civil Liberties found freedom and democratic rule almost non-existent.

III

And yet, the English visitor may find it comforting to learn, that, when the blitz struck Belfast, fire-engines in the Twenty-six

Counties started out almost of their own accord for the North, and the remarkable spectacle was witnessed of Dublin fire-fighters being cheered in the streets of the Orange stronghold. 'They are our people,' said de Valera, 'and their sorrows are our sorrows; any help we can give them will be given whole-heartedly.' What is the Englishman to assume from that? Let him beware of regarding it as an anti-German demonstration. There was, and is, a deep smouldering anger at the destruction of an Irish city, but there is also anger, no less deep, at the fact that it was Britain's partitioning policy that made such a disaster possible. Partition is the rock on which, to the great majority of Irishmen, Britain's claim to be fighting the battle of democracy breaks. Here, in a small island, with frontiers as clearly defined as any on earth, a corner of territory is torn away by an edict of the Legislature of another country, and an attempt is made on the principle of *divide et impera*, to make that wanton, arbitrary and immoral state of affairs permanent. That it cannot in the long run succeed does not render it any the less shocking to Irishmen whose democratic ideal is the establishment of the sovereignty of the people over every inch of their native soil. It is 'an offence against the right of nations' and the one outstanding obstacle in the way of a complete and lasting friendship between the two islands.

IV

And yet, things being what they are and geography being what it is, that is not the whole of the story. When the departing English visitor leans over the rail of the mail-boat and watches the blue mountains behind Dublin City fade away into the western mists, he cannot but be conscious that there are ties which bind as well as differences which sunder his people and ours. The shores for which he is bound are only a couple of hours' run from the Irish coast. Britain is Ireland's nearest neighbour and the chief market for her exports. English literature is the only literature known to those of our people who are not scholars. Ireland has given England not only navvies and dock-labourers, but statesmen, diplomats, generals, admirals, and men of eminence in every profession. The English visitor will have met nobody in Ireland who has not some friends or relatives across the Channel.

[The present writer spent five years of his working career in

Lancashire and ten in London; he found a wife in Somerset; a brother of his held a British commission in the last war (although, afterwards, he fought against the Black-and-Tans at home).]

Irishmen, then, cannot view the present world war as if it were a struggle on Mars. Their unshakable attachment to neutrality does not mean that their sympathies are not engaged. But they expect that if Britain is, as she claims to be, fighting the battle of democracy, she will continue to act in accordance with democratic principles and respect the right of her small neighbour to choose her own position at this cross-roads of history.

T. L. MURRAY

ANOTHER VIEW

SINCE the Act of Union until the Rebellion of 1916 Ireland had been divided into two camps—those who were for the Union and those who were not. The 1916 Rebellion shocked some of the Nationalists. They held themselves aloof from the Sinn Feiners who, tired of talk, had taken to the gun. The Rebellion created a distinction between degrees of patriotism. Since that date the national thermometer has registered many changes in temperature. When eventually a Treaty was made with England and repudiated by Mr. de Valera the result was not only civil war but a new and bitter division between Irishmen which has lasted for twenty years.

After the truce Mr. de Valera refused to enter the Dail, the chief obstacle being the oath of allegiance. In the course of time Mr. de Valera came to the conclusion that the oath was an empty formula: there is no doubt this decision was a fortunate one for him and those of his supporters who saw the light at the same time. Like Mr. de Valera's previous decision it led to a further schism. Some of the opponents of the Treaty refused to take Mr. de Valera's view of the oath. They saw the label 'Made in England' on the Dail, on all institutions that had arisen under the Treaty, on the Treaty itself. Some of these dissenters belong to the Irish Republican Army; others still call themselves old I.R.A. and there

are many in other sects, all of which have republicanism in common.

Fourteen years ago Mr. de Valera entered the Dail. Within five years he formed a Government. At the time it seemed as though the change from Mr. Cosgrave's régime was going to be a major revolution. To the unprejudiced spectator the difference between the two leaders, now, is as that between Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee. Both advocate the abolition of Partition. Both have agreed to make the learning of Gaelic compulsory on the ground that the vast majority of the people wish to revive the ancient tongue and must therefore be compelled to do so. For many public appointments a knowledge of Irish is more important than technical efficiency. Whatever success this experiment deserved, it has achieved but little. Gaelic is seldom heard in private conversation. Plays in Gaelic are rarely performed in the principal theatres. A Dublin cinema showed a Gaelic film once. The experiment has not been repeated.

Partition is a real problem, but one which is perhaps more difficult to solve than those who live to the South of the border will admit. The political machinery in Ulster moves in a mysterious way. Nevertheless no amount of thimble-rigging could regularly provide so stout a Unionist majority. 'Given a free plebiscite,' says the South, 'only four of the six counties would remain out of Eire.' In that event a Government for four counties would be impracticable. Whatever the merits of the rival claims the Northern Government has not shown an enlightened attitude to the Catholic minority. Their treatment compares very unfavourably with the treatment of the Protestant minority—a far smaller one—in the South. Three non-Catholic judges are on the High Court bench in Eire. Two have recently retired from the Supreme Court. Ulster has had one Catholic judge, a County Court appointment, in twenty years. This may be a small point but it does reflect the position of the respective minorities. The truth of the matter is that the real sufferers from the border are within, not outside, it. In these circumstances it is not surprising that politics in Ireland for the first time in history are practically non-existent: what life there is arises from the personality of Mr. de Valera. An election now would only test his present popularity. There is nothing else to decide.

In the unlikely event of Mr. de Valera's defeat at an election

in the near future, Mr. Cosgrave, leader of the Fine Gael Party, will provide the Government. Mr. Cosgrave should have a genuine grievance against the British Government: since Collins and Griffiths died he has led the pro-treaty Party which governed the country for the first ten years of its existence, abiding honourably by the agreement made with Great Britain: Mr. de Valera denounced the Treaty, removed the oath of allegiance to the Crown from the constitution and withheld the Land Purchase Annuities paid to the British, yet the Chamberlain Government in 1938 came to an agreement with Mr. de Valera, cancelled the Land Annuities for a payment of ten millions and gave back the ports to Ireland. The country as a whole did not count the cost of this victory. In vain did Mr. Cosgrave point out that the economic war which preceded the agreement would impoverish the country for a generation.

In politics the spectacular is always the successful. By coming to terms with Mr. de Valera the British Government did great harm to Mr. Cosgrave's prestige at home. This is ancient history now. England will not distinguish in their feelings for her any fine shade of difference between the two Irish leaders since both declare themselves neutral in England's war. If Mr. Cosgrave returns to office he will be in a dilemma. His policy was to govern within the limitations of the Treaty. England has tacitly agreed to the scrapping of the Treaty. Mr. Cosgrave may feel that he can offer the country a more efficient administration rather than an appreciable change in present policy. This is a fair claim. The least vain of public men, Mr. Cosgrave has always endeavoured to gather colleagues of outstanding ability; differing in this respect from Mr. de Valera, who, politically speaking, is something of a Ruth Draper. Outstanding among Mr. Cosgrave's former ministers were Kevin O'Higgins (a man with the qualities of an ancient Roman) and Patrick Hogan. Since the murder of the one and the death of the other, there have been no stars so brilliant in the company. To make up this deficiency Mr. Cosgrave joined forces some years ago with a newly formed Centre Party led by Messrs. MacDermot and Dillon. This amalgamation was blighted at its birth when, by a stroke of characteristic modesty but lamentable judgment, Mr. Cosgrave resigned the leadership to General Eoin O'Duffy, dismissed shortly before by Mr. de Valera from the position of Chief of Police, in which capacity he

ad a great reputation as an organizer. As the Party whip General O'Duffy might have been a success: as Party leader he was a failure. Mr. Cosgrave soon resumed the control of a sadly shaken Party.

The Cosgrave-Dillon combination has been a great success; Mr. MacDermot made an uncomfortable bed-fellow, and it was not long before he broke away from the union. In that undistinguished, impotent and misconceived assembly, reconstituted by Mr. de Valera, euphemistically called the Senate, Mr. MacDermot's first-hand talents now go honourably to waste.

It may become necessary at some time to ask the country for a decision as to whether it is to remain in the Commonwealth or become a Republic. Up to the present this decision has not been made. Mr. de Valera has pursued with superlative skill a tight-rope-walking policy which has won approval at three successive elections. The question cannot be avoided indefinitely. If it is to be put, Mr. James Dillon, Cosgrave's deputy, the only politician to denounce neutrality, seems the obvious leader of a Commonwealth Party. Would Mr. de Valera lead the republican opposition as he did in the Civil War? Or would the embarrassment of so indefinite an issue drive him into retirement? It would be interesting to see. Meanwhile the Republic remains for all patriotic Irishmen what the Messiah is to the Jews—something that will come in its own good time. Since Mr. de Valera took the oath and entered the Dail those he left outside have been the only advocates of a Republic here and now. These men have certainly the virtue of consistency, but the devotion of many to the practices as well as the ideals of their erstwhile comrades has been found a menace to the safety of the State. The Irish Republican Army is now an illegal organization and many of its more prominent members are in gaol.

The unimaginative treatment of the leaders of the 1916 rebellion followed in later years by the Black-and-Tan episode, and the Boundary Commission of more recent date, have combined to produce in Ireland so well-founded a suspicion of the British Empire that there is no wonder Ireland was slow to appreciate the significance of the Commonwealth of Nations. For the Irish it remains the old firm under a new name. There has been no enthusiasm for the Commonwealth ideal; nor has any been seen as a corollary to the decline of active Republicanism. No

suggestion of co-operation has ever appealed to the Irish taste, but the future may see a change in this respect. The last war created a universal sympathy for national resurrections. Whatever the result of this war, the aftermath is not likely to be so favourable to dreams of self-sufficiency. Should conditions deteriorate, it would not be very surprising if eventually Eire had a Government on the Salazar model. Labour has never had any important following. The number of Labour members in the Dail of recent years has been so small that the Party representatives were referred to once as 'the seven deadly sins'. Poverty, shortage of supplies and unemployment demand a remedy, and the Irish public would arrive quite happily at a benevolent form of Fascism introduced to carry out the principles of the encyclicals on economic matters published by the late Pope.

The Irish temper is hierarchical rather than democratic. Having achieved their hard-won political liberty, almost the first step of the people was to impose a literary censorship on themselves; compulsory Irish was another early fruit of freedom. Bureaucracy has grown enormously. A great deal of the political life of Ireland has been nourished on shibboleths, but the religious belief of the people is a very different matter. No plans for Ireland's future can afford to overlook this obvious fact. For that reason acute economic ills, if they are to come, will drive Eire to the Right rather than the Left. This is not to say that Fascist tendencies are anywhere in evidence in Eire, but I believe in an emergency a Fascist State could be brought into being.

Neutrality may create a desire for action for action's sake, and the possibilities I have mentioned may be but symptoms of that desire. Should that be so, Ireland, as non-playing member of the Commonwealth, untroubled from without, peaceful within, her eyes fixed on the dim and slowly receding image of the Republic, to establish which so many were killed, so much that was beautiful was burnt and laid waste, may remain as she is for ever.

T. H. WHITE

LETTER FROM A GOOSE SHOOTER

FELT lonely standing on the white sand in the twilight. They in the currach gave me a farewell as they went. Then, in the quickly falling darkness, shot with the goose cries, I went into the broken house on man's first duty: to make fire. That burning with wreckage, I set out to search for the well. But it was dark now, and the electric torch had broken somehow, so I could not find it. I went to the drinking place for cattle and got water there.

The Inniskeas are islands off the west coast, once inhabited by men. But ten were drowned in 1927, in what is called the Inniskea disaster, and, the land being too exhausted by a thousand years of 'sea-manure' (sea-weed) to grow potatoes any longer, they were abandoned. The little village stands quite silent beside its anchorage, the roofs fallen, the stones of the walls in the street. Twelve years it seems to have lost all human origin. No people are expected by its broken doors. A few black bullocks shelter there at night, the seals come up into the harbour, two small black birds visit it in the mornings, two ravens cronk higher up, and all the time you hear the eternal geese, which, driven away during man's thousand years of residence, have now returned.

The people in the currach had been afraid to leave me, because this was a bad coast. There was a chance that they might not be able to come back in six weeks, as sometimes happens on the next highbour, the Black Rock Light: also they feared the dead of the disaster and perhaps the old God of the island, venerated until the last generation.

Brownie kept me awake for all but two hours, the first night, shivering. Such bed as I could make was strange. I write on the mainland, and I cannot write of it. Such feelings, such thoughts: they are gone with people about me. But if I had had paper, and could have written, it would have been a fountain of feeling about eternal things. I wrote on an envelope, during the strange and sleepless night, a message of propitiation to the God.

On Inniskea, long before Patrick came,
Stood the stone idol of the secret name:
The magic people made him. No surprise,
No threat, no question lit his two round eyes,
Nor had he other features. Consciousness
Was all his feeling, all his creed 'I wis'.
He watched the wild geese twenty centuries.

Inniskea is an island. Ten years gone
The human race lived here, the windows shone
With candles over the water, and men
Fished currachs, women wellwards went from ben.
There was a King to rule the island then,
Chosen for might, who had his admiral
Of all the Inniskeas. The Priest's sick call
Was this cold pasture's only festival.

Mass was so far off, with such storms between,
And in the dark nights moved so much unseen
On the wild waters, that Man's beating heart
Still sometimes turned towards the old God's art.
Much magic was made with the dew. The wells
Secretly stirred with strange internal spells.
To keep the Agent off, or the Excise,
Fires were lit before the God of Eyes
And dances made around his stone, sunwise.
Their old cold Godstone they, for comfort, dressed
In one new suit each year: his Sunday best.

Then the remorseless sea, the all-beleaguering,
The crafty, long-combed sea, the stark and whistling,
The savage, ancient sea, master at waiting,
Struck once.

Two hours later the mainland
Received one man, a saucepan in his hand,
Astride an upturned currach. At the Inn
They gave him clothes without, whiskey within,
Such as they could: but he nor left nor right
Altered his eyes. Only, with all his might,

This man bailed with his saucepan all that night.
 In half one hour of squall, from calm to calm, the Main
 Holding his ten mates drowned had fallen on sleep again.

Nobody painted the houses after.
 The islanders lost all heart for laughter.
 Work was a weariness, dances were done,
 On the island whose pride of Man was gone.

Now I am all alone on Inniskea,
 All alone with the wind and with the sea.
 The corrugated iron, rusted brown,
 Gives a burnt look to the abandoned town.
 The roofs are ruins and the walls are down.
 The Land Commission took the people ashore.
 King Phillip Lavell is here no more.
 They have even taken away the God Who Saw,
 To stand in Dublin Museum. From ten till four
 He eyes the opposite wall.

Oh God of Eyes,

Bound there in darkness and deprived of skies,
 Know that your Geese are back. Know that their cries
 Lag on the loud wind as, by candlelight,
 At Inniskea's one fire, I, your last subject, write:
 Lulled by their laughter, cradled in their night.

was something I cannot explain now, to write this by the
 popping of the firelight, in the one-roomed house alone: the
 eel-pots piled high in the corner, with spherical lobster-pots
 on top of them, twisted out of heather roots: a bed of hay in one
 corner with damp quilts on it: the whole room crammed with
 wreckage (there was a goodish roof to keep it dry): two wooden
 bowls: some seine nets: a bag of flour hanging in the window for
 stewing: a billy-can: a candle stuck in a bottle: the trembling
 log: and outside, within twenty yards, the lonely sea, the goose
 music, the heathen god, the winter night of stormy solitude. The
 flames of the fire in this primæval cave shone on a brown ceiling
 boards.

Three mildewed religious pictures, without frames or glass,

hung from a piece of timber beside the bed of straw. They were as necessary to the place, even when two or three of the islanders slept there, waiting for wreckage, as lifeboats are necessary to a liner. But to a soul alone, possibly to stay six weeks if the weather broke, belcaguered by cold and ghosts and darkness and the sea of night, they were the lifebelt itself. One was of the Sacred Heart, in the middle of a cross; one of some chorister singing with unnaturally goody-goody faces; and one, in colour of Joseph holding lilies and the Infant Christ. His beard was cut like mine. Brownie, a pagan, could find no comfort in these, and that was why she trembled. I stoked the fire and laid her before it, stretching my body across her in order to give by contact such Christian safety as I could. We slept, in three plaids, on the store floor, three hours—waking at intervals to keep the fire bright.

At half-past five it was too much trouble to pretend sleeping. I brewed tea in the billy-can, with a small tot of the fiery west coast rum, and ate some slices of bread and butter. The tea, boiled together with sugar, was fine. Then, a little after six, we opened the windy door and stepped out into the night.

This door had opened itself once in the middle night, and once the candle and fire had simultaneously burned low for a moment, and all night the spirits, whistling like otters, had swung around the deserted homes.

Now, stepping out, I found myself immediately face to face with the Devil.

He was black, motionless, a darkness silhouetted against the darkness, considering me with ears and horns. I stopped also, and considered him. The horns took shape against the night.

When the door had opened itself, I had stood for two heart-beats, then firmly shut it. When the lights had dimmed, I had stood for two heart-beats, waiting for them to burn again. To the cries of otters I had turned a defiant ear. Now, face to face with Satan, I stood as quietly as himself, for many heart-beats.

We watched each other with curiosity, in the calm of a idle spirits. You can only be afraid when you are clothed with civilization, mortal cares, liens of succour. Now that I had no human ties, no roof over my head, no means of escape, I had no human fears. The Devil, with the same dignity as I felt myself, moved off quietly in the shape of one of the few black bullocks who are left all winter on the island. I had not frightened him.

ne did not gallop away with the sudden panic of half-wild cattle—and he had not frightened me.

I stepped on slowly over the fallen stones of the village walls, stones which man could hardly detect except by touch and the wild sense of animals. The only thing was to walk with the patience of pre-history, moving with a balanced body between shapes, at half-a-mile an hour, knowing only the stones, the fallen roofs, the choked drains, the wreckage, the rocks, and the feeling space of night.

I was half-way to the destination which I had chosen, imagining landmarks which themselves consisted only of the dark, when a thing flew up from under our feet. It circled two or three times invisible, praying like a donkey. The strange cry of the ass has got some quality of levitation about it, and perhaps the ruined walls may have reflected the noise in various directions. There were donkeys on the island, too; but my heart knew it was not these. With the beads in my pocket and the magnum in my hand, I did not fear it.

By seven o'clock we were at the fallen gable, and, almost simultaneously, and almost directly overhead, there was the first low quack of the geese. I could not see them.

The sun, when he was eventually resounding on Achill and Develaun and Innisglora and the distant kingdom of Erris, found us collecting six dead Barnacles and chasing two runners. We were sated with our glorious victory, the first time I have, killed so many at one flight. Fixed in this memory, now, is the first meteor of a darker darkness, streaking down out of the superb squadron; the soul-satisfying Thump with which he bounced upon the salty land. Then, as the light grew, there had been the crouching under the wall, the white breasts advancing with their thrilling cries and ordered ranks, Brownie ruthlessly held down in cover, the body straightening and the two bangs, the second almost coinciding with the thump of the first goose. This is the first time, out of some three hundred sunrises or sunsets, that I have had what I can call a left-and-right at geese. Those two White-Fronts on Cartowmore last week, for instance: I was between them and the wind, had time to reload, and killed two geese out of four shots. But today, for the first time in my life, it was Bang-Thump, Bang-Thump: the real McCoy.

It seems that *Branta leucopsis* (once, she seemed to be called *Branta bernicla*, but there is no keeping up with science),

a species I had not handled, is earlier in her flight than the grey geese. She has a lower, more monotonous, taciturn, dissyllabic,¹ quacking note. She has great vitality from the killing point of view, is as cunning as the grey goose, but she does not raise herself in the air when shot at with the same rapid acceleration as her cousins. This heaviness in soaring is one of her chief differences. In appearance she reminds one of the sixty-year-old spinster aunts who used to frequent England in my childhood. She has the same black shiny gloves, the jet beads, the dress of black and dove-grey garnished with white, the high collar which was introduced by the wife of Edward VII, and she probably keeps her toque on with a long black jade hat pin. The average weight of eight birds—I have given one away and cannot weigh it—was $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. One thinks of her as female, but all the other geese I know as male. In the hand she is female: in the air, like all the grand geese, male.

Sleepy and satisfied, we plodded the clean sand back to our burrow, and made more tea and bread and butter. The interior of the little house was a surprise in daylight, for, as the bullocks were liable to break glass windows, the owners of this, the soundest building on the isle, had covered in the windows with corrugated iron. It was dark inside, both day and night, a sort of cave-life refuge among the straw and looming lobster pots and smoke.

The forenoon passed pleasantly in a long but profitless stalk of a large barnacle party on the other side of the hill. I had pleasure watching them for half an hour. With a good appetite from this, we came back to dinner, which was to consist of a cold roast chicken I had brought with me. I had a bite from the breast and plenty of bread and tea, but Brownie had the two legs, the two wings and the carcass. I could not persuade her to eat bread and butter; so, as she had suffered an unhappy night, I let her have the meat we owned.

Eating the good bread by the quayside, I heard geese taking a trip, and ducked into a broken door. Peering out with one eye, I saw the main party turn back; but one, evidently a raw recruit, came on over my head. I was half ashamed at killing so many geese in the morning, and, thinking that there was moderation in all things, particularly in regard to Edwardian spinsters, had

¹ Or you could call it a repeated monosyllable.

decided to slay no more. But this was too much of a temptation. I stood up, pointed my gun at him with a second's hesitation, saw every feather of his breast in the frosty winter sunlight, and the white-scarfed head turning hither and thither as he looked about to discover why he was now alone. Then the temptation was too great, and, taking my finger from the choke trigger to the cylinder (where I knew there was a small cartridge of No. 2 shot) I let him have it with the proper lead. Smack! He struggled madly in the air, with one wing broken at the elbow, turned four or five somersaults, and landed thumping on the white sand of the harbour—where Brownie was waiting to receive him. She brought him to me, his live snake head curling upright on one side of her mouth, and, hating the business of screwing the tough neck, I thumped his head on the door post to break his brains.

These geese had been sent over by two men in a currach, who, in fishing the bay, had made a visit to the North Island to brew themselves tea. Now, when I had wanted to snatch an hour's sleep, the two rowers of the currach themselves arrived to pay a visit. They were Irish-speakers, who apologized for having the English badly; they danced round me like pleased dogs, delighted by the strange beard-man who had dared the ghosts, giving loud joyful cries of hospitality to their old kingdom, where they themselves had been born in the last century. They had been born on the flat North Island, however, and disapproved my choice of the featured both.

We had high pleasure with each other. I bid them welcome to the South with a glass of rum; they watched me finish my dinner, sitting interested in the dark den, watching my eating manners; and we had long talk. The elder of the two always addressed me affectionately, laying his hand upon my sleeve, as 'my good man.'

I was told about the Godstone, his yearly suit of new clothes—gathered they were of blue serge—and how the South Island, once growing jealous of the North's holy possession, stole him away to the South in a currach one dark night. At about this time a barrel of paraffin was washed ashore, and the King of the South had it brought into the house where the Godstone stood, hidden away behind a curtain at the hinder end. They were experimenting with the paraffin—a novelty to them—in the hopes that it would be something to drink, when a child set fire to it, and the house

was consumed. One man was burned to death in the flames. But the fire halted at the curtain of the Godstone, and he was untouched. 'You may say what you like, my good man, but there was something strange about that, wasn't there?'

I expressed my indignation at his having been taken in chains to Dublin, and asked what was he like? 'We do not know,' said the elder man (Reilly); 'he was in my father's time. A priest,' he added indignantly, 'then came and broke him. But the Godstone hurtled his foot, and he was dead within the twelvemonth.' 'Do you mean that it fell on the priest's foot?' 'No, no,' cried Reilly testily, 'it *hurtled* his foot.' I was left with a confused guess that there was a verse of Scripture, brewed up with magic, distorted by translation from Irish into English, at the back of his strong mind. He probably had no idea about its being in the Bible: 'Thou shalt bruise his head, but he shall bruise thy heel.'

'Where,' I asked, 'was the Godstone kept when they stole him?' 'Why, in the house you are in now, my good man: did you not hear anything last night?'

In the course of great compliments upon staying alone with the spirits, the younger man said strongly: 'If they were to offer me three million pounds, I would not stay alone on the islands. I have travelled the world a bit' (here he bowed courteously in no direction) 'perhaps I would stay. But in my present state I would not stay a night alone, no, not for three million pounds.' He giggled at the thought of anybody offering him this sum.

We discussed the thing which brayed. The whistling, the thought, was otters or seals. I whistled in imitation, and the older man, cocking his head on one side, said 'Otters' emphatically. But the braying stumped them. Donkeys can't fly over your head, geese don't bray, and the Godstone would be too heavy to fly. Anyway, he was supposed to be in Dublin, though I doubt whether he spends the nights there. My own opinion, that it was the Banshee of the geese, crying the souls which I was to slay this sunrise, I kindly left without expression.

Were there any other stones on the island? Yes, plenty. There was a very good one quite close to here, which they would show me when they were showing me the well after I had finished my dinner: it had photographs on it.

The photograph stone was a thin slab of limestone stuck upright above the harbour. It had a circular cross, like a consecration

cross, upon it, and underneath, beautifully carved, the kind of wriggle which you find in the book of Kells.

There followed conversation about the North Island, dear to them, as yet unvisited by me. They eagerly urged me to come across to it in their currach, but I would not go. A currach is a primæval water vehicle with no keel, kept upright in the sea by faith. It is said to be very safe. But I did not care for it, since being in one on this long-rolling sea the day before, and I thought the motor-boat might come to take me home while I was away, and at any rate I had conceived a dislike for the North Island. It was too flat to be interesting. Trying to provoke my interest they pointed out one high, symmetrical, lonely sandhill: the landmark of the island. What did I think it was made of? It was not a sandhill at all. It was made of three things, with the sand piled round them: the three things were stones, shells and bones. 'Bones of what,' I asked, thinking of some prehistoric kitchen midden. 'Men's bones, of course.' 'Good gracious, what sort of men?' 'Oh, it would be those Danes, I suppose,' said the elder Reilly off-handedly. 'A lady came here in the summer,' he added, 'from Dublin. She was digging them up, you know.' Considering the matter, he reported with awe: 'She put a wire fence all round them.'

We had much other interesting talk, about the two public-houses there had once been (one was a shebeen), and about the dragging home of brides: how only the younger people could go to mass, and then only on fine days, because it was not safe to take the old people in boats in case of storm: about the last King of the island, a big man with a voice like thunder, who was killed by drinking crude rum washed ashore, spent a month in the Belmullet hospital, but was brought back to his island to die: about a man who had hanged himself from a rafter: about Columkille's church on the North Island; about the whaling station which the Norwegians once made here, and the great Iron they had left.

Then, seeking a little information for themselves, the old man mentioned that the Germans were very thorough men. I agreed. 'Was I an Englishman,' he asked, with hesitation. 'My mother was certainly an Englishwoman,' I said, 'and I was educated in England. But my father was Irish.' 'Well, that's the way it goes,' he said, rubbing his hands together with delight. [It was, indeed, within the bounds of possibility that I might have been a German spy. The Irish Government has set up half a dozen coastguard stations

on this coast, to watch for submarines, and a man who could bring himself to live alone with the spirits of Inniskea was to him worth considering.]

We arranged to come out to the North Island in a three-man currach in January, there to spend some weeks together in amity, they to give me the Gaelic properly [‘B’fuil gacdilge agat?’ they had asked,] and I, with stammering tongue and shame: [‘N’il so gacdilge agam’] to give them change of thought I suppose. Then, waving their caps in farewell, they pulled out of the harbour, and the currach dwindled across the sea.

The barnacles made no evening flight that sunset; they were upset by the moon, now growing. I guessed that on moonless nights they spent the day on the South Island, the night on the lake of the North, but that when the moon was strong they would fly at whim. I had caught the flight in the morning partly because it was the first quarter of a growing moon—they were not yet taking it for granted—and partly because the clouds had killed the light.

In my dark home I carefully dried two of the fishermen’s quilts before a big fire, hard-boiled four eggs, of which I chopped up two for poor Brownie (who thought me no cook), drank tea, and made a bed with loving thought. Then I put the beads over my head, to wear them like a necklace which would not need holding and slept in their protection. After an hour’s deep unconsciousness I woke at eight o’clock in an agony of cramp. Disposed again in better position (the priest’s position for sleep, called, I believe, ‘in Grace’) we sank into the deep world again till midnight; then woke with the roar of the wind outside, and its whistle under the door.

I revived the fire in the now freezing room, and lay listening. They had not wanted to leave us on the island, and I had been forced, pointing to the sack which bulged mostly with the rug and two saucepans, to affirm that I had food for a fortnight. But there were only four loaves of bread, two pounds of butter, and a little sugar and tea, besides twelve eggs and a pot of Bovril. Brownie was too pampered for these things. I was not troubled about starvation, or anything dramatic of that sort, but the dog would lose condition, and a long stay might be a bore. There were enough geese to live on for the rest of the winter. Considering how I would fix up a wooden spit to roast the geese, and how I could eat a green plant from one of the streams, which looked :

like watercress, I fell into blissful sleep for the third time, and I had slept eleven hours in all.

I had no geese the third day: the moon had put them off. With my dead, I did not think it worth the while to be stalking them. Going out to the morning flight, I found the wind had dropped. In the afternoon the motor-boat called for us, on her way from relieving the lighthouse at Black Rock. By the evening I was back in a hot bath in Belmullet (population 500) feeling as if I were in London, but feeling also this sense of loss in Bedlam. All the unanimity and reality which I had collected on that last day, exploring the caverns and strong promontories of the west coast of the island: all the deep racial thoughts I had felt there, and the conviction of the relation of God to man: the cairn I had made of the bodies of two of my shot geese, which had been found by the herring gulls before I found them: all the hours on the high places, with only a pair of ravens above me: all my strength was momentarily crumbling away. I can only remember that the North Island is said to be inhabited by one cat, and that, on my last morning, when I was standing by the glorious, lonely Atlantic harbour, wondering whatever other Christmas present God could think of for me, I looked up to find a pair of young ravens playing a few feet above my head. They were quite small, only about the size of jackdaws, and every feather on their bodies was perfect. I watched in rapture, admiring the strong re-curve of their glossy primaries and the way they wagged their feather-perfect tails. I thought how strange that young ravens should be as small as jackdaws, that they should have this thin and almost curlew beak. I looked earnestly upon the beak, and upon the feet. My heart pounded as I distinguished the redness, even against the sky. No wonder they were so trim, so much lovelier than any of the black-guard I had previously known. They were the red-beaked houghs of legend, looking on Man for the first time—as I on them.

NOTE. Written three years ago from the gossip of a first visit to Muskeg, this letter is inaccurate about the 'Godstone'. Unfortunately, it is not easy to revise one's facts in verse, without wrecking the rhymes. Since that time I have collected ten equally contradictory accounts of the object, from septuagenarian Irish-speaking ex-islanders, some of whom had seen it.

It was called the Naomhog, and has twice been mentioned in print: once by a protestant cleric called Cæsar Otway, and once by an English General, both of them giving it a short paragraph as trippers. It seems to have been a smallish flat slab of stone, with a female figure cut on it in outline. It may have represented a sixth-century saint called Gedh. Its properties were to vanquish fire, quell or raise storms, and to promote fertility in potatoes. These things it did in response to seven Hail Mary's, seven Our Father's and seven Glorias; but it had to be brought in procession from the cottage, where it was kept in a niche in the wall. It was clothed in flannel, not to keep it warm, but to keep it together. For it had been broken by a sea 'pirate', who may have resented its adverse effect upon the elements in which he traded. After breaking it he fell down near the grave of taidhg (the photygraph stone) and 'made two pieces of his back'. This, by the way, disposes of another picturesque tradition that the Godstone's suit of clothes was always found to be worn out in the right places, at the end of each year. It seems that a person in the Protestant colony at Achill heard about the Naomhog some sixty-five years ago, and wrote to an English paper, adducing it as yet another proof that all Catholics were idolators. This came to the notice of the local parish priest, who caused himself to be rowed to the island, confiscated the Godstone, and hurled it into the shallow sea from a rock called cairrigén dub'h. The sea, according to one account, turned blood red, and not only the priest, but all those who rowed him, were dead within the year. The parish priest was buried in 1876. So the Naomhog was not taken to Dublin—the objects taken by Mlle Henry were a couple of seventh-century gravestones—and it now lies a few yards north-east of the rock marked Carigcenduff on Ordnance Survey, easily retrievable at Spring tides: unless, as I privately believe without evidence, it was fished out as soon as the priest had left the island. If so, it might be back in its niche, behind the lobster pots.

This compressed footnote is not the place to argue an idea which I believe to be valid: namely, that the Naomhog had a peculiar effect upon Irish literature, and that it altered, through Michael Comyn and finally Yeats, the legend of Bran-Brendan-Oisín in Tir-na-n'Og.

As an example of one's difficulty in writing anything definite here are the ten septuagenarian answers to my question: 'Wha

it look like?' 1. It was like a pillow, with the mark of a saint's
 on it. 2. It was a terra-cotta statue of the Child Jesus. 3. It was
 at stone with the Blessed Virgin on it. 4. It was a plain yellow
 one. 5. A spotted stone for the altar, like a cross. 6. It was the
 pe of a human corpse, resembling the Blessed Virgin. 7. It was
 shape of a nun. 8. It was like a woman. 9. It was like a woman.
 It was like a smoothing iron.

The weights guessed varied between $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. and 2 stone.

The Thing Which Brayed might have been a Manx Shear-
 water? If not, it must have been the fated crane of Inniskea,
 mentioned in Ogygia under the following terms:

*Insulâ Iniskeâ, Scriptis ut fama priorum
 Credula commendat, regio quâ prominet Irras
 Oceani in fluctus, grus est ab origine rerum
 Unica Syderibus minimè consumpta coævus.*

KENNETH CLARK

JACK YEATS

As a small boy whose sole ambition was to do a drawing good enough to be accepted by *Punch*, I remember being much disturbed by the very simple drawings which used to appear sometimes tucked away on the last page of that journal, with the signature W. Bird. They had none of the tricks of the trade, and in consequence looked to me very bad. I remember protesting about them to my drawing master. When, much later, I first saw paintings by the same artist signed Jack Yeats I had the same feeling of resentment at anything so different, so oblivious or perhaps so jauntily defiant of all the artistic fashions which I was at that time painfully learning to adopt. They were, to begin with, frankly illustrations; and the life they illustrated was fierce, feckless, and independent, very far from the comfortable bourgeois bohemianism which I, in common with most middle-class Englishmen, supposed to be the artist's lot. Those proud, angry-looking men, with cloth caps pulled over one eye, those high-stepping horses, and stormy, ragged race meetings, suggested a way of life in which man was neither an economic animal with respect for law and order, nor an æsthetic animal, with a respect for learning and the Russian ballet.

The style, in spite of some echoes of Daumier, was independent too. But it was not independent enough for Jack Yeats, and with the recklessness of advancing years he had a revelation. Why should he be confined by the rules of representational painting? All that mattered was to convey his feelings in their original intensity. And in an amazingly short time he created for himself a new style, which may owe something to Monticelli or even to Mancini (a favourite painter of Hugh Lane's), but is about as personal as any style can afford to be. The result has been to enlarge his work both in a literal and in a metaphorical sense. Packed as his small early paintings often were with romantic feeling, they gave little indication of the flood of poetry which the new style released.

It is an extravagant style and had his subjects been drawn from fancy or legend the result would have been unreal. We should have felt, as we often do before German romantic pictures, 'Th





a bit too thick'; for Yeats is not master of the great store of natural appearances which allowed Turner or Delacroix their extravagance of style and subject. But fortunately, in his later work, the scene has not changed. Bars, bridges, pantomimes, beaches and race courses, these are still his favourite settings, and the new style fits them even better than the old, because they all support the feeling of irresponsibility, the feeling that under such various conditions of light and luck anything may happen. Very rarely he attempts a more directly magical subject, as in Miss Eraser's beautiful picture called 'Those Others'; and occasionally he paints a kind of tropical Eldorado which, the titles tell us, he supposes to exist in the Pacific. I do not know if he has ever been there; it serves as a pretext for a peculiar effect of light both pale and brilliant.

Light plays a symbolic rather than a logical part in Jack Yeats's work; a capricious part, too, for it comes in through windows reflected from running water or wet pavements, so that the ceilings of his rooms are always lighter in tone than the floors; or it explodes in an outrageous sunset, throwing off great solid fragments of cloud like uncut rubies in an Arabian Nights valley. In fact light is transformed into colour, for colour is Yeats's element, in which he dives and splashes with the shameless abandon of a porpoise. Perhaps the metaphor is misleading, for it suggests that he uses colour for its own sake, decoratively, whereas he uses it chiefly as a means of expressing the emotion aroused in him by his subjects; hence the great range between smoky pictures like *Coming to Wolfe Tone's Grave* and pale ones like the *California*, fiery ones like *Wey, hey and up she rises*, and milky ones like *Those Others*. The mere cookery of painting—the creation of agreeable substances—rarely interests him, and those who look first in painting for the gourmet's joys will be disappointed. Some of his smaller pictures, for example the *Rose in the Basin*, do contrive to be delicious, but they are exceptional. His subjects are important to him, and it often helps to know what he had in mind when painting a picture; but most of all it is necessary to know Ireland. Great landscape painters can only be understood after a visit to their native countrysides, for their work is always more faithful in nature and less stylized than we imagine. The hills of Umbria are as round and soft as they appear to be in a Perugino, the mountains of Cadore are as blue as the background of a Titian, and even the fantastic landscapes of Sung and Yuan are

as realistic, the camera tells us, as the water meadows of Constable. And so one discovers in Ireland that some of the most improbable effects in Jack Yeats's painting do seem to exist in that strange saturated atmosphere, where, for that matter, the word 'improbable' has little meaning.

A comparison with the great poet, his brother, is irresistible. Both loved proud and passionate men, men who yield to the magic of an impulse; and they found such men in Ireland, where a crazy feudalism had left them nothing to lose, where tinned foods, building societies, the instalment system and all the other modern means of destroying human independence had hardly penetrated. The poet Yeats said that he wished to write ballads which should be on the lips of men who could not read, and praised 'So we'll go no more a-roving' because it was great poetry with the lilt of popular verse. But he could only find his way to a direct vernacular utterance by passing through labyrinths of myth and learning. Jack Yeats was there in a leap, and may seem to have reversed his brother's development, for his early work is in the style of popular ballads, and often actually illustrates them, whereas his later work is symbolist in its use of evocative colour and makes no concessions to the dull average eye. But the poet's long discipline, his painful search for a myth comprehensive enough to allow him to write simply, gave his work a certainty which his brother's painting lacks. Occasionally, even in the latest pictures, one catches sight of those naive uncertainties of drawing which so much shocked me in the work of W. Bird. They are exhibited with engaging candour, they are subordinated to a larger intention, but they remind us that Jack Yeats is on the outer rim of European painting with some of the drawbacks of remoteness. Yet without that remoteness could he have preserved the native flavour which is so great a part of his strength. Could he have avoided the tricks and dogmas of fashion, the process by which art is tinned for export, the art of which all the advertisements speak so well? Men of twice his natural talent have succumbed. And where but in Ireland could he have discovered that aristocratic violence of style and subject besides which the taste and learning of his more prudent contemporaries seems bloodless, transitory and dim.

An exhibition of the work of Jack Yeats will be on view at the National Gallery for about two months from January 1st, 1942.

SEÁN O'FÁOLAIN

YEATS AND THE YOUNGER GENERATION

WHEN I look at the large book which constitutes Yeats's effort to explain the nature of life and thought, *A Vision*, I want to think back into a certain corner of the latter half of the nineteenth century. That particular aspect of nineteenth-century life is presented for me by a few fragments that persisted into my time. I see a laneway somewhere behind the National Gallery in London, where, in a dark and poky shop, painted a hideous blue, I bought my first books about what used to be called the Occult. There is a familiar villa door—one of the hundreds such scattered over London's suburbia—with a tarnished brass plate, rubbed to holes at the corners, faintly announcing scances for given nights in the week. Its only counterpart in Dublin is the stable door opposite the old Huguenot Cemetery by the Shelbourne Hotel where the Hermetic Society still meets. Or I hear again a syl in Gordon Hall, Boston, answering the eager-timid questions of her audience about dead relatives, and I feel again the painful embarrassment of each palpitating questioner. There is the evening spent listening to Annie Besant. There is Yeats talking about a strange experience with a medium in Soho. These are all the personal scraps I have from that extraordinary period after 1850, when, as if in reaction from the despair of Darwinian materialism, there arose a fever of what I can only call pseudointellectualism usually mingled with interest in the arcane. In our day there is no spookism worth talking about.

And one reads up the period: reads that spiritualism arose, in America, some time around 1848; it still flourishes; and that Madame Blavatsky was working towards Theosophy; and that the Theosophical Society was founded in 1875; it had reached Dublin with the usual time-lag of ten years—Yeats gave the opening Address to the Dublin Hermetic Society. The first paper dealt with spiritualism and the fourth dimension. Christian Science was founded by Mrs. Eddy in 1866; the First Church was

established in Boston in 1879. I think it fair to say that the defining motto was, 'All is Infinite Mind'. There was at the same time a revival of interest in Swedenborg, Hinduism, Buddhism, the Hermetic Writings, Rosicrucianism, Egyptian religions, Jakob Boehme. One may check up on that by looking at any good library catalogue under these headings, just as one may, in the future, check on the modern revival of interest in Kierkegaard. There are, for instance, several English biographies of Swedenborg after 1854. The wide popularity of *The Light of Asia* would alone testify to the interest in Indian thought in the last quarter of the century, even if there were not, again, a striking increase in the number of books on Indian ideas from the same period. Not in the least pseudo, but indicative of the general interest in the unusual is the foundation of the Egyptian Exploration Fund in 1883. It happens to coincide with the first of the many exciting books since published by Flinders Petrie—a man as eagerly read by Æ as Sankara or Patanjali. Scientific studies into the nature of the mind itself were further aerating the intellectual atmosphere. Hypnotism was taken out of the hands of experimenters and charlatans when it was favourably reported on by the British Medical Association in 1892. Charcot's studies in pathology were published between 1886 and 1890. William James was simultaneously experimenting in psychology, in America. The Freudian subconscious was about to be laid bare. Poetry, responding, possibly to the general fermentation, was, with such as Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Laforgue, subjective, symbolist, inhuman, non-realistic, twilit.

The young intellectuals of the time had thus, if their natures had any such disposition—and we know that it was so with young Yeats and Æ—an entry into an excitingly Eleusinian sub-world, half hocus-pocus, half sincere, now soporific, now stimulating, where thought could be levitated into the stratosphere like a dream. They generally entered that hangar of the mind via the poky shop in the back lane; and in its back room they ballooned out of it. For Yeats and Æ it could have been otherwise if they had grown up in London or Paris, in a certain cultivated milieu; for in such cities there are milieus where the intellect is rarefied without being fantastic, and one may sift the strangest ideas without having to mix with lunatics and cranks for the sake of heterodoxy. They need not have gone to Paris.

Christiania, small as it was, would have done. But not Dublin. Dublin rotted on the stalk of the eighteenth century. In Dublin there was only orthodoxy or hysteria.

II

There are innumerable indications that both Yeats and Æ attracted to themselves some of these floating ideas. Their interest in Theosophy, for instance, is a matter of history; but Theosophy was such a hotchpotch, and so hopelessly non-intellectual and disorderly—especially at the start—that it led them both down many bypaths. Yeats playing about with Rosicrucianism, with alchemy, with magic, even with table-rapping, doing such fanciful things as putting out all the lights but a little Roman camp in Edward Martyn's castle and imagining himself taking part in some fantastic romance—all that kind of thing one knows about; and, in so far as one bothers with it at all, one dismisses it as the natural caparison of young and febrile genius. What really is important is the subjection of the mind to what these things symbolized. George Moore, on the contrary, had his python and his incense, but did he subject his mind to *La Bohème*?

This mental subjection is something more easily felt than defined. What synthesis Yeats managed to evolve out of his multifarious interests emerges, in so far as it ever emerges, in fits and starts, and was always subject to a kind of catalepsy. I once spent months trying to list these interests for the fun of seeing what he got from each. It was my invariable experience that by the time I had plodded heavily one-tenth of the way down any particular avenue, such as Indian philosophy (I was so foolish as to attend lectures in Harvard), he was away down the second-next one, plucking up the golden apples as fast as he could run. He never, I saw, had studied anything deeply. His amazingly sensitive and receptive mind—were it trained he would have made an excellent scholar—were it, rather, capable of being trained—rapidly elicited the interesting thing, or the essential thing, and the rest was ruthlessly abandoned. He had no interest in knowledge, fact, or objective truth, for its own sake. All one can do, therefore, is to observe the essential fact that he rejected the intellectual approach.

He wished for the lightning flash. He dreamed, accordingly, of

a Sacred Book. He found many such. Now it was Axel. Now Alastor. Now Manfred, Athanasius, or Ahasuerus. Now the work of some Cambridge Platonist of the seventeenth century. When he found that Blake revered the revelatory imagination he bowed down and adored. It is to be particularly noticed that all this is a private dream—revelation; the lonely thinker; it is separate; it is non-gregarious. So is his great idea of the unifying personality. Here he adored the man brought into unity by a mood—which is personality—as against static unity—which is character. That idea he may have taken—I believe he did so take it—from his father, the painter, and it has been one of his most important and formative ideas. His debt to his father has never been assessed; all his major ideas are better and more clearly expressed by John Yeats in *Evening Memories*. For from him, too, he took another equally important idea—that the world had been broken into fragments shortly before the birth of Shakespeare, and therefore an artist who would try for Unity of Being (John Yeats gave him the term, Unity of Being) must find some traditional subject, in working over which the disintegrating separateness of the modern over-intellectualized artist would be countered, and the old breadth and stability and harmony return again. That subject Ireland gave him, and as it, too, had its magic, its folklore, its ancient memory, its mystery, and its passionate love of life, and its non-intellectual simplicity, he was able to alight there, safe for a time, out of the esoteric balloon.

It was an extraordinary voyage and it had an unexpected conclusion; and naturally we can more easily observe the end than record the fluxive currents that had, before he alighted, blown him this way and that. We know, however, that having thus published three or four books with an Irish flavour, he floated off again into the symbolism of the Rose poems. Of these he says in the autobiography that 'there was something compelling me to attempt creation of an art as separate . . . as some Herodiade out of the theatre dancing seemingly alone in her narrow moving luminous circle.' So persistent was the attraction of the mysterious, the eclectic, the secret, the personal isolated communion.

But—and this is the interesting antipode and for him the vitalizing influence, since he lived, one might say, deliberately by conflict—he was aware of a tidal movement in his nature, out of this private self. 'It is perhaps because nature made me *a gregarious*

man that I love proud and lonely things. When I was a child . . . found one poem that delighted me beyond all others: a fragment from Aristophanes wherein the birds sang scorn upon mankind.' But he is firmly sucked back. 'In later years my mind gave itself to gregarious Shelley's dream of a young man studying philosophy in some lonely tower, or of his old man hidden from human sight in some shell-strewn cavern on the Mediterranean shore.'

Later—far later, in the late 1920's—he discovered Hegel and was there confirmed in this idea of life as an antinomy. For the formative period of his life he was simply groping about here and here, happy with any kind of imagery or crude expression of his innate feeling that the duality of a man's nature is the germinating element. It was an unhelpful period, I cannot help feeling, and I think how, in the 'seventies, Ibsen, much better off in this respect, was reading Hegel, Schopenhauer, Hartmann: trying in *Emperor and Galilean* to resolve the conflict of the blind will of nature with the personal will of man; forcing his people to take part in a world struggle over ideas; inventing a Third Empire out of a conflict between opposing powers in life; posing Hegel against Comte; dissecting his own abilities and desires in terms of contemporary philosophy and religion. No—Dublin was not helpful, nor even London. It was inevitable that Yeats, while wishing for the lightning flash, should have had to serpentine towards his final position. And it is another tribute to the inviolability of genius that he managed to sidestep so many provincial temptations—to use them—and guard himself, and keep himself, even as far as he did, intact.

III

Compare with Æ, who meantime was being much more obvious and straightforward about it all. He embraced Indian philosophy at the start, and as he kept close to it all his life, it gave direction to all his reading and bottom to his thought. He did so because he was disposed to be much more simple of heart; and disposed, especially, to be intellectually persistent. He did not deny the lightning flash, but he chose a particular brand of lightning and 'since then used no other'. He was not arrogant, or egotistical—the philosophy he embraced involved self-subjugation to the point of self-suppression—and he had a gift of accepting and rapidly adapting. He had not a father, like John

Yeats, who put things endlessly to the question, fraying them away and away while insisting, in a typically Yeatsian manner, that no artist should have any opinions at all; a man sociable with his equals, anti-social with the masses; mischievous of mind, complex, barely saved from being a complete gasbag by the fact that he had a tactile itch—was a painter. Æ was tolerant and unassuming, was so little sensuous that the imagery of his verse is as impalpable as a veil. He was mild and kind, was almost without sensuality, and could easily have been a priest. The main difference between him and his young friend was that he looked at life with the eyes of innocence, and the other looked at life with the eyes of desire. The important element in him—the defining element—was his sweet toleration.

That tolerance was of the two main kinds that we meet in life. In the spirit of the first kind we say: 'For an Atheist—or a Communist or a Fascist—he is a grand fellow'; and we view the world as a series of groups, and all activity emerges as compromise. In the spirit of the second kind of tolerance we say: 'He is an Atheist, *et cetera*. But he is a grand fellow', and that means that we hold to our own ethic more firmly, and all activity emerges as indoctrination, apologies, propaganda, sorrowful friendship, and the tolerant man is either restless and self-driven, or he is shy and timid and withdrawn. Æ was now one, now the other. In his social work he was the propagandist. In his poetry he was both—integrated by what was virtually a form of religious verse. There is really no progression in that verse: it is the same note at the end and at the beginning; there is neither advance nor decline.

Now, obviously we have here two dispositions that, though alike in a hundred ways, differ in an essential way; two men brought up in circumstances unusually similar, diverging at a crucial point. Is it simply a conflicting conception of character and personality? Character which implies static morality, and morality which implies an order in nature, and an order in nature which, by implying co-operation, self-subjugation, rational control, brings us back to character once again? Personality, which (in the Yeatsian concept of what that term means) is fluid; which is egocentric and not submissive to the order of nature? If anything it tends to mould the order of nature to its fancy; for it does not easily co-operate, or subjugate itself, as character does. Was this the distinction between Yeats and Æ? I think it is, mainly,

this which distinguished them. But we must also see that Yeats had, in the conflicting duality of his nature, a concept of personality which was largely a reflection of his own bivalvular nature, not an intellectual idea at all, but a self-conscious role.

IV

I see this when I turn to *A Vision* to search for the natural object of the natural ego, or Will, in his philosophy, and find that its 'ideal of good' is defined as something made for man, out of his daemon's 'memory of the moments of exaltation in his past lives'. Pass over this question of reincarnation; the essential point is the phrase 'moments of exaltation'; and its logical—I beg everybody's pardon for the use of a hateful word—its logical implication is that all such moments unite only in the isolated ego, never in any permanent synthesis of themselves outside the ego, never in any order capable of being considered apart from that ego which gives them their sole value (and which therefore deprives them of all value for any other man's ego). What Kant calls the 'reign of ends' is denied therein.

In short, the object of the Yeatsian Will is not capable of being regarded objectively. It has no extra-personal continuity. It is, at best, an object like the Stoic's concept of virtue—pure form independent of realization. It is most natural, then, that Æ should feel that a will which had no object was not a will, as it is impossible to conceive a gun without a target.

A man with such a philosophy could never, it is evident, be anything but a disconnected man. There could be no evident continuity in his thought. But if no such man could exist, neither was Yeats a phantasm. He was too firmly founded in life, too passionate, gregarious, intensely sensitive, too arrogant to live in so dim a cavern. He had, indeed, as I have shown from his autobiography, liked to think of himself as a lonely sage in a lonely tower or a sea cavern, studying strange tomes; but he outlived that. He hoped, instead, to find a concept of personality to unite his human gregariousness and his artistic loneliness. He never did. His idea was appalling in its self-consciousness, in its power to deceive and mislead him—as it did time and again. Thus a good deal of his arrogance was pure self-conscious fake, which sprang from his inability to become part of common life, a

psychological recompense for his incapacity to be human. His political ideas followed suit. They were incubated in self-defence. All his pretensions to be part of the great Anglo-Irish lineage arose from this; and they were rather pathetic seeing that he was connected rather with trade and the more easily attainable professions. His indifference to the common people; his Fascist tendency; his dandyism; his fastidiousness—together with the later efforts to break away and become as bawdily robust as his friend Higgins; indeed his attraction of opposites towards Higgins—were part of that self-conscious rôle arising from a constitutional weakness. The new generation, while admiring his achievements as a lyric poet 'this side idolatry', felt this uneasily and felt that he was not assisting them.

They were faced with problems far more insistent: social, political, and even religious problems. They had grown up in a period of revolution, were knitted with common life, and could not evade its appeal. As time went on those problems became savagely acute. For one thing, the young generation were nearly all Catholics, either by conviction or atavism, and the Catholic Church in the new Ireland was making life impossible for them. The Censorship alone illustrates that, but behind the Censorship lay the general asceticism, or Puritanism, or Jansenism of a quite uncultivated popular feeling, combined with a long social tradition of penury which knew little about the luxuries of mind and body, and which developed, in self-recompense, a suspicion of everything that savoured of that intellectual independence which comes with centuries of social and economic independence. So, on the one hand the younger writers had their deep-rooted love of their own people, and on the other their as deep-rooted longing for intellectual detachment, independence of thought, converse with the world, varieties of opinion, the whole search for what men call Truth. Their problem was to find some synthesis between the gifts of their race, and their own personal integrity, and that had to be, *has* to be, arrived at objectively; conceived almost in social terms, since they are chiefly novelists, dramatists, fashioning a criticism of life out of their observation of man in relation to society. (Yeats generously and clearly saw that himself and said as much in his public speech at the founding of the Irish Academy of Letters in which he remarked that the material on which the new generation had to work was infinitely

tougher than that out of which he and his generation made their poetry and their plays.) That synthesis has to be an honestly objective one, a philosophical and moral definition of life as it is lived. Had the new generation come to this when Leo XIII was on the throne they would probably have all been Modernists. As it is, the current 'intellectual Catholicism' of the neo-Thomists merely exasperates Irish writers by its gentlemanly academicism, its irrelation to actual problems, and its ultimate subservience to illiberalism; the most they can hope to be is what, I think, the Spanish intellectuals call 'cultural Catholics' or else fall in with the mass of disgruntled professionals who have hypocritically compartmentalized life, or become corroded with bitterness, and finally demoralized by the prudence of their silence.

In an impasse like this a new generation can get no help from the aloof and subjective Yeatsian self-dramatization. Even in the one human battle which he did fight with the full voltage of his splendid pride and will—for the freedom of the theatre—the situation to-day, as modern war commentators say, is very confused, largely because he always wanted a poetic theatre, hated in his heart of hearts the realism with which his theatre gradually became synonymous, and left no helpful guidance for the handling of that essential problem beyond laying down certain canons on which his successors could not agree; and very naturally so, since these canons were also part and parcel of his own constitutional aversions and not objective criticism at all.

V

I think that a good deal of this subjective escapism of Yeats arose from the emollient atmosphere in which he grew up in London, and which he accepted too easily. If he was going to live by 'personality' he should have revolted against that atmosphere at once. For when we think of the modern men who seem not to have lived by static character but by personality, the names that come to us are the names of gregarious men out of a very different atmosphere—Landor, Donne, Dick Steele, Sterne, Horace Walpole, Goldsmith; and to these, none romantics, the *one* romantic, Shelley. We think of men whose character was static, and think of a later period—Arnold, Wordsworth, Gray, Tennyson, Rousseau, and possibly Browning—all romantics except

Gray. And surely it is to the former company rather than the latter that Yeats belongs. His poetry strikes me as having, at its best and most representative—the later, final poetry—the metaphysical quality of Donne and the virile clarity of Landor. It has none of the particularization of the romantic poetry of 1800–1850. How many concrete images could one collect from the whole corpus of it? It has the Aristotelean attitude towards nature in so far as it is not subservient to it, selects its beauties, perfects its charms, is never imitative of nature but is nature wrought to a finer pitch; and these are Dryden's phrases. It does what the old classical dogma about the twin arts of painting and poetry always asked poetry to do—'presents us with images more perfect than the life in any individual and we have the pleasure to see all the scattered beauties of nature united in a happy chemistry without deformities or faults.' Again, Dryden. If that is to be called Romanticism, it is at most the orderly 'Romanticism' of the Pre-Raphaelites which was, in actuality, a turning back of the clock to times behind the disorder of the Romantic soul. But if the essential Yeats had any literary affinities it was really with gregarious men of the eighteenth century. And an interesting thing is that he half perceived this affinity 'with Landor and with Donne'.

In the eighteenth century men could live by personality because their world was ordered. In the nineteenth century men more commonly lived by character because their world was disordered. Every Romantic of the nineteenth century was either a moralist or a radical—like Rousseau, or the Radical Blake and the Radical Shelley. But because a man cannot but reflect his time, the art of the eighteenth century is a formal and orderly art, and the art of the nineteenth century is an explorative art. You cannot live by fluid personality in a fluxive world—you have to hold order within you as a bulwark against the chaos outside. It is the chaos which creates the internal order; the outer order which releases the internal flux. Yeats dodged this issue.

VI

I suppose I need hardly say that I have not been writing an essay on the poetry of Yeats, but merely a note on one aspect of the man in relation to his work, and even this suggestion of an

evasion due to a constitutional frailty I have been careful to qualify by noting his own awareness of the antinomy within him. And as the man grew and developed we could see him facing his own personal conflict magnificently. I have asked certain questions about his will, and his mind, and pride, and the full answer is in his *Collected Poems*. Here are the poems that smell of the books on Occultism in the back-shop, and faded bookmarks left in little-called-for books out of the British Museum, bog myrtle smell from Sligo and Gort. From 'eighty-five—interested in Theosophy and attracted by the picturesque Ireland. Blake and Symbolism from 'ninety; for though he did not meet Verlaine until 'ninety-three, and Symons not, probably, until 'ninety-six, the general idea was abroad for years. Here is *The Rose* in 'ninety-three, and *The Wind among the Reeds* in 'ninety-nine with the last drops from the Symbolist flagon. Always, however, the Irish note sounds out like a dance to which this wine is but a drug. By 1903 we see the effect of the Theatre, of passionate fruity life from the heart of John Synge, controversy and fight, 'the gutter'—'I am trying to put a less dream-burthened will into my work.' By 1906 he is driving out of the cocoon of mind, delighting in 'the whole man, blood, intellect, and imagination running together'. But experience is costly and he is complaining in *The Green Helmet*, of 1910, about the poems he did not find time to write since his last previous volume—which was 1904. By 1916 he had written enough to establish him in his place, but he was still far from the end of the road, and it was a somewhat weary man who wrote in *The Wild Swans at Coole* the poem—'I would be ignorant as the dawn. . . .' But take the whole volume of that year and there is a new impulse and a purity of eager desire and a masculinity that made some critics dislike the new note, merely because it was unfamiliar.

Never until this night have I been stirred.
The elaborate starlight throws a reflection
On the dark stream,
Till all the eddies gleam,
And thereupon there comes that scream
From terrified invisible beast or bird:
Image of poignant recollection. . . .

ere is no question of dodging conflict there. The mad world

of war in Europe, and war in Ireland, saw to it that he should feel the nightmare on his chest.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction and the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

That volume, of 1921, was his turning-point.

Obviously, if everything the man wrote was of that intense order, then what I have said about his constitutional frailties would fall to pieces. As it is, he did not publish that volume until he was fifty-six, and not merely did he continue to write a great deal that was not taut, and was cloudy and flaccid in the subjective rôle, but some of the very best of it, as in the 1928 volume, *The Tower*, when he was sixty-three, was the chant of this old personal adventure through a fantasy-jungle that he had largely created for himself (and which he so loved to chart, as in *A Vision*). See, for example, that poem of fine-drawn gold *Sailing to Byzantium*. It was all an amazing psychological construction that he had, since boyhood, built up for himself, and Æ, who knew him thoroughly, though he was never sympathetic enough to be detachedly delighted, has marked out some of the stages by which this psychic conflict was self-nourished, ever since the youthful poem about *An Indian on God* and the peacock gazing at its double, and the dewdrop listening to the sound of its own dropping—ever since the day when Æ showed his friend a drawing of a figure whose shadow was reflected behind it in the fog, and Yeats was madly excited by this Brocken Spectre symbol of his own duality.

What does it matter, one may say? Poetry is poetry whatever excitement creates it. True, though there are different kinds of poetry, and different values, and, indeed, that is all I have been trying to say—thinking of those sources to which my generation might turn for help, and those where we may find it and may not.

FRANK O'CONNOR

THE FUTURE OF IRISH LITERATURE

I

WRITING about the future of Irish literature is like writing of the future of the Lancashire industrial towns—the subject is a question mark.

By Irish literature I don't, of course, mean literature written by Irishmen. People like Shaw and Elizabeth Bowen will continue to write, and to influence young men and women in Ireland, but that is not what I mean. I have no desire to be exclusive or nationalistic, because, except for reasons which have nothing to do with literature, it doesn't matter a rap whether a writer is Irish or English. A national literature is one of the luxuries of a civilized people; it is like a national opera; it permits a young man or woman growing up in Cork or Helsinki or Kalamazoo to look at the life about him through the medium of a racial outlook and philosophy, without his instantly beginning to pine for London and Paris and Rome. It is the only escape from provincialism. It was in this way that we as boys saw *The Playboy of the Western World* and felt that, after all, life in Ireland was not too bad. It was certainly not in this way that we saw *Major Barbara* with its Salvation Army and its millionaires; its young dudes and professors of Greek who were also students of comparative religion. That, if we hadn't armed ourselves against it with an overweening nationalism and racialism, would simply have made us want to get out of Ireland by the first boat. If Shaw were Irish literature, there would be no possible doubt of its future.

Irish literature, as I understand it, began with Yeats and Synge and Lady Gregory; it has continued with variations of subject and talent through a second generation. Is there to be a third, or will that sort of writing be re-absorbed into the main stream of English letters? That problem seems to be fundamental to all regional literatures. A Mistral or a Synge can create one almost out of his head, but obviously it must be maintained in some

other way; it must have its inspirations from without and within; the face it presents to the world and the face it presents to its own initiates; its changes of temper, its classic, romantic, realistic, philosophical periods. It must be part of the European system, not a mere folk survival, petrified in some sort of mediæval fancy dress. The death of Yeats made us all ask ourselves precisely how much of that sort of Irish literature was really left.

And first, how did it begin? It did not spring entirely out of Yeats's head. It was part of a whole national awakening when a small, defeated and embittered country began to seek the cause of its defeat in itself rather than in its external enemy. At the same time, and almost as part of it, began the attempt to revive the Irish language; the co-operative agricultural movement of Plunkett and Æ, the Labour movement led by Larkin in his eagle youth, and the Sinn Féin movement for abstention from Westminster led by Griffith. In those days there were at least half a dozen movements to which any young man of spirit could belong; all of them part of a general attack by the younger generation on the enemies within: the imitator of English ways—the provincialist; the 'gombeen man'—a very expressive Irishism for the *petit bourgeois*; and the Tammany politician who had riddled every institution with corruption. Irish literature fitted admirably into that idealistic framework; it was another force making for national dignity. 'We work to add dignity to Ireland' was Lady Gregory's favourite dictum.

But after the success of the Revolution that framework collapsed, and as happens, I suppose, after every successful revolution, Irish society began to revert to type. All the forces that had made for national dignity, that had united Catholic and Protestant, aristocrats like Constance Marcievicz, Labour revolutionists like Connolly and writers like Æ, began to disintegrate rapidly, and Ireland became more than ever sectarian, utilitarian (the two nearly always go together), vulgar and provincial. In the first flush of victory a minister like Mulcahy could bring over from Germany an Army Director of Music, and the Irish Government could allow an Irish engineer to plan the great Shannon Power Scheme. Within a few years it would be impossible to appoint an Irish Protestant as librarian. I have seen Æ in a fury of despair raise his hands to heaven and shout curses on de Valera. 'I curse him now, as generations of Irishmen will curse him.' Æ fled the

country. Every year that has passed, particularly since de Valera's rise to power, has strengthened the grip of the gombeen man, of the religious secret societies like the Knights of Columbanus; of the illiterate censorships. As I write, even a piece of sentimental Catholicism like Miss O'Brien's *Land of Spices*, which, in America, has been a colossal success among sectarian organizations, is legally outlawed in Ireland as being 'in its general tendency indecent'—it contains one brief reference to homosexuality. The Film Censor boasts that he has compelled the film-makers to change the title of *I Want a Divorce* to *The Tragedy of Divorce*. One is not permitted to speak of Birth Control, and the sale of contraceptives is forbidden.

In fact, Ireland has used her new freedom to tie herself up into a sort of moral Chinese puzzle from which it seems almost impossible that she should ever extricate herself, and which young people can only contemplate with fascination and amusement. One minister is reported to have said recently when he was asked whether nothing could be done with our extraordinary broadcasting service, 'Let them listen to the B.B.C.' They do! It is part of the general breakdown of national pride that everything the Government touches is believed to be hopelessly corrupt and incompetent, that every appointment is believed to be a 'job'; and that specified and unspecified groups are supposed to be making fortunes out of the economic chaos produced by the war. That is probably a grossly exaggerated view. The significant fact about it is that there is no idealistic opposition which would enable us to measure the extent of the damage.

Even the Abbey Theatre since Yeats's death has lost all prestige. Yeats's own plays, as well as those of Synge and Lady Gregory, have been entirely dropped from the repertory. It is worth while comparing the voices. This is Lady Gregory in 1914:

'Often near midnight after the theatre had closed I have gone round the newspaper offices, asking as a favour that notices might be put in, for we could pay but for few advertisements, and it was not always thought worth while to send a critic to our plays. Often I have gone round by the stage door when the curtain was up, and come round into the auditorium by the front hall, hoping that in the darkness I might pass for a new arrival and so encourage the few scattered people in the stalls.'

This is Ernest Blythe, managing director in 1941:

'It all depends whether the best plays, as you call them, played to decent audiences. As far as I'm concerned, a play's a failure if it doesn't ultimately draw an audience. It's a miserable failure in fact. I don't think anything's so discouraging for either the actors or the playgoers as a house that's more than three-quarters empty. It doesn't do anybody any good—not even the author.'

Small wonder that young men and women are fleeing the country in thousands. In the worst days of the blitz I used to meet them in the passport office; boys and girls who had cleared out of London, Birmingham and Liverpool when the raids began. Now they were shivering with fear lest the British Passport Officer might refuse to allow them back. 'Oh, anything is better than Ireland,' they said hopelessly when I drew them into conversation.

II

When O'Faolain and I began to write it was with some idea of replacing the subjective, idealistic, romantic literature of Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge by one modelled on the Russian novelists. Superficially, there was a lot in common between the Irish and the Russian temperaments—the comparison has been overworked. And there was probably another, racial element in our choice of models. In one of his letters to Florence Farr, just published by the Cuala Press, Yeats says: 'I have noticed, by the way, that the writers of this country who come from the mass of the people—or no, I should say, who come from Catholic Ireland, have more reason than fantasy. It is the other way with those who come from the leisured classes. They stand above their subject and play with it, and their writing is, as it were, a victory as well as a creation. The others, Colum and Edward Martyn, for instance, are dominated by their subject with the result that their work as a whole lacks beauty of shape, the organic quality.'

There is profound truth in this criticism, though the matter isn't quite as simple as Yeats imagined. Writers who come from Catholic Ireland do bring with them something of its anonymity; are more impersonal; more identified with their material; they tend to sentimentalize or brutalize it, and rarely does one find a Catholic Irish writer playing with his material as Synge played with his. But that is history, not destiny, as Yeats seems to have imagined. He could have seen the same thing in England of his own day; the Irishmen, Shaw and Wilde, standing above their

subjects and playing with them; while Hardy and Lawrence, dominated by their subject, trudged through the mire.

But it is true that the literature of Catholic Ireland (and one needn't go beyond Joyce to prove it) is dominated by its material in a way in which the work of Synge and Yeats rarely was, derived from an abundant personality which found in the old sagas or in the wild life of the Aran Islands symbols of its own emotions, rarely was. Since Yeats's death, Irish literature has passed almost entirely into the hands of writers of Catholic Irish stock, and, as I've pointed out, since the Revolution their material has been very much under the weather.

Take, for instance, the work of Sean O'Fáolain. His first novel, *A Nest of Simple Folk* (the title itself an avowed plagiarism from Turgenev), is a rich, leisurely, lyrical book about life lived at its very simplest among the peasants of County Limerick. It deals with no great events: an abortive attempt at an insurrection (lightly passed over); the transference of a family from country to country town and from country town to provincial city. It has no outstanding characters; indeed, the people he describes are scarcely articulate, yet their little pieties and follies are described with tender sympathy.

His second novel, *Bird Alone*, set in the same provincial city, is in a very different kettle of fish. It is the story of a raw youth and girl whose love affair brings them into conflict with the furious piety and Puritanism of Catholic Ireland and ends in despair and suicide. The little pieties and follies are drawn once more, but now with a definitely sinister turn. The characters have begun to be articulate: to demand a fuller, richer life for themselves, but as their aspiration grows, the sense of the dead weight of his material hangs more and more heavily on the author's mind, and the book is almost choked by the feeling of anguish and claustrophobia. The nest of simple folk has raised its head out of the mud and been horrified by what it has seen.

In a play which intervenes between this and his latest novel O'Fáolain seems to me to have found himself for the first time. Characteristically it is called *She Had to Do Something*. Turgenev at this time is definitely off the map. It is a comedy about a Frenchwoman in just such a provincial town, and her attempts to form a society for herself and her daughter out of the tatterdemalion provincial celebrities; the 'intellectual' priestess; the would-be

small-town dandy; the poet who is giving up the job because everyone expects him to 'have a good influence'. As a play, it may not be a great success, but it is delightful entertainment. For the first time O'Fáolain looks at his material through the Frenchwoman's eyes and sees how preposterous it is, and his laughter echoes right through the play. I felt when I read it in manuscript that it was the first time O'Fáolain really wrote as himself, as a personality, not as an anonymous Catholic Irish writer like Colum, but throwing all ancestral pieties to the winds.

In his new novel, *Come Back to Erin*, a young revolutionary goes to America, falls in love with the middle-aged wife of his step-brother and becomes her lover. She is complex, cultured, subtle; he gawkish, puritanical; a young provincial barbarian. Irish critics profess to lament the long American interlude, but for me, as I am sure, for most other people, it is the whole book. The author of the two brief sections dealing with Ireland seems to me the old O'Fáolain who is bewildered and distressed by what he describes; it is only when he reaches America that he begins again to use the full range of his powers; and there we get astonishing sureness; a broad, sweeping outline; comedy and poetry. The nest of simple folk has found its way out at last.

But what of the author? He has grown up in his own material; has learned at last to use the full range of his powers, but what the blazes can he use them on? It is quite clear that, having written the middle section of this book, he would be a fool to go back to the uncertainties of its Irish sections, except with a very different approach. It is also clear what Irish critics dislike. It is no longer regional literature; the writer has ceased to find what is most valuable to himself in Holy Ireland, and cannot translate back into its idiom what he has found outside it. Into that life a cultured Frenchwoman or American—and that means their creator—simply will not go.

III

O'Fáolain's work provides the typical pattern; the rest of us the illustrations. I have just finished reading another book which drove it home to me. It is the first novel by the most remarkable of modern Irish poets, Patrick Kavanagh. In it he describes the life of a country boy in a north of Ireland village which is dominated by an ignorant, good-natured old parish priest. The story

begins with an attempt by a group of boys and girls to establish a village hall in which they can meet and exchange ideas. The hall is a symbol of the life they would really like to lead, but which they never can lead because the old village tyrant opposes the licensing of 'the Anti-Christ Hall', as he calls it, and there is no one strong enough to defeat him. And so we see the principal character, in love with a decent girl whom he can never meet under decent conditions, masturbating his soul away, until the girl he loves is seduced by the local Don Juan (though, except for this once, *his* Don Juanism has never been anything but a mental exercise), while the hero settles down in comfort with a cow of a girl who has a little fortune, and the Anti-Christ Hall becomes a cattle-shed.

It is O'Fáolain's second novel; my own second novel; it is Gerald O'Donovan's *Father Ralph*; it is *A Portrait of the Artist*; it is the novel every Irish writer who isn't a rogue or an imbecile is doomed to write when the emptiness and horror of Irish life begins to dawn on him. It raises in a peculiarly acute form the problem which Yeats merely stated, and it forces one to recognize how false is the superficial comparison with Russia of the last century. Tchekhov, the son of a slave, could write as easily of a princess as of a peasant girl or a merchant's daughter. In Ireland, the moment a writer raises his eyes from the slums and cabins, he finds nothing but a vicious and ignorant middle-class, and for aristocracy the remnants of an English garrison, alien in religion and education. From such material he finds it almost impossible to create a picture of life which, to quote Dumas' definition of the theatre, will embody 'a portrait, a judgment and an ideal'.

It is highly doubtful whether without the whole moral and philosophical background of an awakening nationality the work of Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge would have been possible at all. Without it a realistic literature is clearly impossible. We have, I think, reached the end of a period.

IV

It is not a time for prophecies. One can say, that of any stirrings of hope within there is no sign, but the war is far from being over, and by the time this article appears its changing fortunes may well have dissipated Mr. de Valera's dream of a nonentity state entirely divorced from the rest of the world. If that happens, and

Mr. de Valera is obviously very much afraid it will, we shall all have to think again, but in the meantime what can the Irish writer like Patrick Kavanagh do? How is he to compose this fundamental quarrel with his material? O'Fáolain's way in *Come Back to Erin* is not really a solution, nor, of course, is it intended to be. Inevitably it merely provokes the retort that, once having left it, you would be a fool to come back. That way leads to London or New York, and unless a change comes, that is where it may soon lead those of us who still hang on to Erin for choice.

Theoretically, of course, it is possible for a writer to live in a country where his books are banned, where there are no magazines to print his work, where all power is in the hands of a fanatical and corrupt middle-class, and never, never emerge from his ivory tower. But like Whitman when he saw the oak tree growing alone, 'I know I could not do it'.

The only alternative to that private world is the public platform. It is the way Spender, Day Lewis and Auden took in England, and it has always been a regret of mine that there was no corresponding movement in Ireland where the need for it was so much greater. Within the past five years there has been, so far as I know, but one play which attempted to grapple with any real problem: Collis's *Marrowbone Lane*, which dealt with the Dublin slums. It was rejected by the Abbey Theatre; not, I imagine, on its merits. The only literary periodical which is generally read, *The Bell*, edited by O'Fáolain, has in fifteen months of its existence steadily refused to recognize the war—it is an old dispute between myself and the editor. I am bewildered by the complete lack of relationship between Irish literature and any form of life, within or without Ireland. Blandly, sentimentally, maundering to itself, Irish literature sails off on one tack, while off on another go hand in hand Mr. de Valera and the Church, the murder gangs and the Catholic secret societies. It may be argued that they are the business of publicists, not of artists, but there are no publicists, there is no public opinion, and if the artists do not fight who will? And if we don't fight, and new circumstances don't settle Mr. de Valera's hash for us, what is to become of Ireland or Irish literature?

Two things must happen if Irish literature is to survive the war. One is that somehow or other a theatre must be established, since the theatre is the only art form that can directly influence opinion,

particularly now that the censorship of books is acting, more or less effectively, as a gag on the novelist. Secondly, the Irish writers must be prepared to come into the open; we must have done with romanticism for the next twenty years or so and let satire have its way. Not necessarily a cruel satire, because the Bogey Man in Ireland is far less a monster than he is in industrial countries; but certainly satire; for here he has a chance which rarely comes to him in industrial countries, of smothering all opposition, quietly, good-naturedly, without a struggle.

EDWARD SHEEHY

PROTHALAMION

JOHN DE COURCY was reluctant to leave the comfort of his seat in the warm bus. He waited until all the other passengers had got themselves and their luggage out before he descended to the pavement, where he hurriedly buttoned up the neck of his heavy tweed overcoat against the bitter east wind that was blowing along the quays. Slowly he started to cross the road towards the corner of Westmoreland Street; but hadn't advanced more than a few paces when he hesitated, turned and walked slowly back to the quay-wall, where he stood apparently watching the reflections of the neon signs writhing and twisting on the choppy surface of the river, at the boats pulled by wind and tide straining at their moorings.

No use in trying to think things out in this misery, he decided, as he watched the people hurrying across the bridge, their cold-blotched faces averted from the direction of the wind. He needed a drink, a stiff one, to pull him together. The point was, should he go over to the Palace, where he'd be bound to run into some of the boys. The temptation was strong. But no; it would be simply disastrous to get tied up with a crowd when he had to have the whole business over in time to get the nine-o'clock back to Bailyross. Better go somewhere where he wasn't known. Purposefully now he crossed the road and pushed open the door of O'Mara's.

The outer bar was crowded, mostly workmen and a few clerks.

The warm air was heavy with the odours of beer, tobacco-smoke and damp clothes. He pressed his way through; the inner bar was not so full. The drinkers moved respectfully back from the counter to allow him to order a large gin with a dash of lime. He liked it less, but at the last moment decided that it wasn't so noticeable as whiskey. He swallowed it in two draughts before the curate returned with his change, when he indicated with a nod that he wanted the same again.

'It's a bad night, sir,' an elderly, worn-looking clerk said at his elbow.

'Wretched, wretched,' he answered brusquely, looking away, shrinking from the proffered contact.

When his second drink arrived he took it to a small table in the far corner and seated himself with his back to the drinkers at the counter. As he sipped the gin he relaxed slowly and felt the arms of the chair comfortingly support his back. He felt better already, decidedly better, and smiled to think of how Ballyross would be scandalized to see him, John de Courcy, the highly respected solicitor, bolting a double gin like that. They'd probably conclude he was on the verge of bankruptcy, or threatened with an action for maintenance. A bad job if they guessed the hole he was in. But they never would, not in a thousand years. As the warmth of the room and the drink began to steal through him he threw his coat open and removed his hat, which he placed on the table beside him. No, the yokels would never guess, nor Canon O'Donoghue, nor that crawl-thumper Wrigley at the bank. He changed his position slightly to enable himself to see his head reflected in the mirror which advertised Power's whiskey in gilt letters. The result pleased him; it reassured him to look himself fair in the eye, to meet his own glance with confidence and imperturbability. It certainly wasn't the look of a man likely to be the victim of circumstances. No, sir. Vera used to tell him he had a distinguished head. She used to say that he was the only really civilized man she knew: not bad that for a country solicitor considering that she knew half the writers and artists of Dublin. Poor old Vera, he thought, with a sudden access of tenderness; she wasn't so hardboiled as she thought she was with her modern ideas and her bachelor flat. It was the perfect adventure in many ways until she began to get ideas into her head. Poor old Vera. He finished his drink in a sad, valedictory toast.

He turned, caught the curate's eye and indicated his empty glass. The curate ducked under the counter-flap bringing him another gin. He needed it. He decided to take this one more slowly while he thought the matter out. So far he hadn't really faced up to the situation. He couldn't afford to get tight, but the drink would help him to attain the necessary objectivity. That's what he needed, he thought, objectivity. Now this morning he had allowed himself to be panicked, a cardinal error and fatal in dealing with a woman. He should have remembered that from his mother. God, how like his mother Martha had sounded, the same tone, the same angry severity, the same narrow, bigoted. . . . No, you couldn't very well blame the old woman; she had lived through different times. But from Martha, even though she was the Canon's sister, he certainly had never expected anything like that. He went over the conversation he'd had with her in the hallway of the Leinster Arms that morning. Had he his certificate of confession? His what? Told him he couldn't be married without it. Completely flabbergasted him. And then going on like a sermon saying what a good thing it was because it prevented people from approaching the sacrament without a proper sense of its sanctity. The same old cant while he stood there like an idiot trying to think of a way out, of how, at least, he could avoid having to go to Confession in Ballyross. He saw his mistake now; he should have brazened it out, told some story or another to the Canon and everything would have been all right. He had let himself be panicked, just as he did when he was a kid and his mother questioned him. His one idea had been to gain time. Told her he had to run up to town to fix up the Collins case which was coming up on Tuesday; didn't want any business worries hanging over him during the honeymoon, he had tried to insinuate. 'But barristers don't work on a Saturday,' she would think of that. 'Oh, this man's been out on circuit all the week. I've arranged to go out to his place in Ailesbury Road.' But of course she had to read him a lecture: 'And do you really mean to tell me, John, that you wouldn't have gone to Confession anyway? Surely you knew there was to be a nuptial Mass and that I certainly meant to receive.' As if she owned him, body and soul. And the worst of it all was that he hadn't an answer except the air of a martyr harried with multitudinous affairs, his business, the decorators in the house and all that. He had to listen to her, to reassure her with

his: 'Don't worry, old girl, I'll run up to town, see MacFarland, trot over to my little man in Whitefriars Street and be back on the nine-o'clock bus. How'll that do?' But of course she had to have the last word, more in sorrow than in anger: 'But you know, John, I really think you ought to give more thought to those matters than you seem to. After all they are more important . . .' and so on and so on, like his mother's 'I'd rather see a son of mine dead at my feet than have him lose the faith.' And he was going to spend the rest of his life listening to that kind of thing.

He hurried through his drink in the vain attempt to dislodge the sickly fear that weighed on his stomach. He should have known that gin would have that depressing effect, and wondered if it would be dangerous to change over to whiskey at this stage. Without allowing himself time to think he went to the bar and ordered a small whiskey. With a feeling of irritation he noticed that the drinkers were looking at him curiously. He ignored them pointedly while he counted out the exact tenpence so that he wouldn't have to wait at the counter for the change.

The trouble was, of course, that ever since his mother's death he had completely ignored the religious side except for an occasional appearance at late Mass when he happened to be at home for the week-end. It had certainly never entered his head that he'd find in a woman of Martha's education the same narrow bigotry he had come to look on as the peculiar property of Ballyross. For fifteen years he had got away with it. The yokels hadn't an inkling. To them he was the respectable Catholic solicitor. Even the two scandal-mongering terrors, the Misses Kavanagh, had openly canvassed the suitability of his engagement with the Canon's sister. For fifteen years he had pulled it off. They never suspected his weekly trips to Dublin, his evenings with the boys, intellectual little soirées you might call them, mellowed with slow moderate drinking, the discussions, the arguments, the epigrams, the French or Latin tag so exactly right. And Vera, lovely, civilized, cultured Vera. Another world altogether from their stuffy superstitions and eternal prying. *Moi, j'ai été aussi en Arcadie*, he murmured into the collar of his coat. Diplomacy, that's what did it, and the little man in Whitefriars Street. He chuckled audibly to the silent amusement of the drinkers. Splendid little man, Father Sylvester—and entirely his own creation, apart from the fact that the name

appeared over one of the confessionals. He loved the little man in Whitefriars Street, his brilliant, tolerant, kindly Carmelite friend whose reported conversations had so often called forth from the Canon the heavy judgment that the Orders had more learning than piety. The whole town knew of Father Sylvester, his great friend, and concluded that his soul was in good hands: a useful state of affairs in a place like Ballyross where a man's soul is considered everyone's legitimate business.

The whiskey was certainly a great improvement on the gin; he ordered another. He prided himself on the fact that drink never obscured or dulled his faculties. On the contrary, a few potations, if anything, gave his mind a certain lucid detachment. Now, up to this morning, his prospective marriage had shown every advantage. Martha wasn't bad looking. She was well educated; had a B.A. degree of Cork in fact. Well connected, and her fortune wasn't anything to be sneezed at. Not that she was getting a bad bargain; she wasn't in the first flower of girlhood, as one might say. The Canon himself had been particularly anxious for the match, active even. A good move putting that income-tax recovery business into his hands and that deed of assignment for the house-property in Listowel. A good deal of the hard-headed Kerry peasant about the Canon, with his: 'She'd make you a good sensible wife, John, which is just what you need over in that barracks of yours in the Square. And she won't come empty, John, I promise you. That is, of course, if ye have a mind for one another.' There was no gainsaying the Canon's arguments. Forty was leaving marriage a bit late. As it was he'd be well on the way to seventy before he'd have a son of age to take over the business. And then there was that feeling he'd been having during the past few years, especially coming on to Christmas, of being alone and uncared for.

Of course there hadn't been any extravagant passion: they were both a bit beyond that and, anyway, she wasn't the kind to let her feelings run away with her or encourage any—well—pre-nuptial familiarity. In a way he respected her for that. When she accepted him he had a vision of the transformation their marriage would bring about in the house in the Square, the clean bed-linen, the well-cooked meals, the little attentions and refinements a man values: a home, in fact. He wasn't sentimental, but he had to admit that 'home' was the only word which expressed

exactly what he'd looked forward to. This bitterness of hers on the subject of religion was the one fly in the ointment. And it came as a complete shock to him, the knowledge that this woman would consider she had the right to pry into his mind, to question his ideas. And have the whole of Ballyross behind her in the process. He should have foreseen it; that's where he'd made a fool of himself. 'By God, John de Courcy,' he told himself, 'you're in for it now if you don't watch out.' Now that he thought of it, she was the kind of woman who'd be still more formidable as a matron, a kind of *arbiter elegantiarum* to the whole of Ballyross; only *elegantiarum* wasn't quite the right word.

He finished his drink and ordered another. He didn't care now that the drinkers at the counter were watching him over their shoulders and glanced at one another with raised eyebrows. Thought he was tight, did they? Yokels! He cowed them deliberately with the contempt of his glance before turning back to his drink and the contemplation of the situation.

He had now considered the worst and was pleasantly amazed at his philosophic detachment. The panic was gone. After a few potations, he considered, the body becomes torpid, and the mind, liberated, is capable of—well—of philosophy. If only he were with a few of the boys to-night, the chosen spirits, how he could talk. The old head was doing its stuff. 'Women, gentlemen, have a capacity for hysterical intensity that is proof against any of the intellectual processes. Women are primarily concerned with appearances and not at all with reality.' He certainly was in form to-night. It takes the man to get the best out of alcohol. 'Drink affects women, as it does stupid men, by making them reckless, not philosophical.' Ah, the mood, the epigrammatic mood. He should have been a writer, an artist. But really now, he must get down to the business in hand. This Confession now, he taunted himself, let the liberated mind play on that. He smiled at the ease with which he attained the duality of thinker and actor. He took himself to task with frowning severity: 'Now, de Courcy, this is all damn silly. We know you haven't been to Confession for donkey's years; we know you don't want to go to Confession. But circumstances, circumstances, old man, over which you have no control make it imperative that you produce tangible evidence of having performed that act before the nine-o'clock bus for Ballyross leaves Aston's Quay. After all you've only got to make

up some harmless story and get it over. It's a mere formality; hasn't the slightest significance for a man of your intelligence. Of course you could play the idiot as you nearly did once when you were a raw undergraduate. You could go back to Ballyross, pitch the Canon and his sister to hell. . . . But I don't think your life after would be any too comfortable. No, old man, you used to profess an admiration for a certain Machiavelli. Now's the time to have the laugh on the whole bloody lot of them. How about bringing the little man in Whitefriars Street to the rescue? No false heroics now; they're in bad taste. After all you can't very well play the martyr for a cultured agnosticism.'

A heavy, Italian-looking, white-aproned man carrying a basket stopped by his elbow, muttering sadly: 'Fresh shellfish. Oysters fresh.' He refused with a shake of the head, and, remembering the cold outside, buttoned up his overcoat.

II

There were few people in the body of the church, but the seats round the confessionals were crowded. He crossed himself with holy water from the font, genuflected and walked slowly towards the high altar, glancing from side to side at the names over the boxes. He was aware of the silence, of the diffused sweetness of incense. There was something strange and incongruous in the unaffected devotion of a young man telling his rosary. Half-way up he saw the name Father Sylvester over a box to the left. He genuflected again and slipped into a seat. Instinctively he crossed himself again and knelt, bowing his head between his arms. First he had to think out a plausible confession.

Drunkenness, that'd do. And missing Mass on Sunday after a late night the night before. Didn't say his morning prayers. Sounded a bit childish, like disobedience, which was always a standby when he was a kid. He went through the seven deadly sins. Most of them sounded a bit vague. 'I was guilty of envy, Father.' Too much explanation involved. Or gluttony. If the priest asked: 'How do you know?' How did one know, anyway? Immodest thoughts and desires. Yes. And Vera. Good God, surely he wasn't beginning to take the thing seriously. No. Vera's ruled out, he told himself angrily; that's taking the joke too far. Don't be an idiot. You've got to get it over as quickly as possible. First you say:

'Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.' How long? Say five weeks. And the *Confiteor*: 'I confess to Almighty God. . . .' You're supposed to have said it before you go into the box.

After all, why should he have to wait? Those others were just doing their ordinary routine. It'd be hours before he got through that crowd. A penitent came out with bowed head and a man entered. Next came a kindly-looking woman in black. Her sleepy grey eyes wandered without interest, while her pale lips moved in prayer. He approached and bending towards her, whispered:

'I beg your pardon, Madam, I wonder if I could possibly get in quickly. You see I'm to be married in the morning and I've got a bus to catch at nine.'

She smiled understandingly, a bit roguishly, and said: 'You're welcome, sir.'

He knelt on one knee in the aisle while the woman whispered the news to her neighbours. One by one the waiting people looked at him and smiled, pleased to oblige him because he was to be married in the morning and had a bus to catch. The minutes dragged while he listened to the indistinguishable murmur from the interior of the box. At last he recognized the tone of absolution, the sibilant contrition of the penitent. A moment later a sickly-looking youth emerged and John de Courcy slipped into the gloom and isolation of the box.

He knelt upright, facing the shuttered grill. In that position he felt short of breath and his heart began to beat loud and insistently against his ribs. It seemed only yesterday since he had last knelt like this, shuddering with guilt, fearful under the weight of his childish sins, consoling himself with the thought that in a few minutes he would emerge into the light of the church, glad, liberated, free from his load. But now. . . . A horrible sickening nostalgia seized him. He wanted to escape. He wanted to rush from the box. 'Don't be an utter idiot', he told himself. 'Hold yourself together for God's sake.' He tried to distract his thoughts with wondering what Father Sylvester would be like. The little man in Whitefriars Street. But the joke didn't come off. 'It's too late now anyway,' something in his head kept insisting, 'too late. You'd miss your bus. You've got to go through with it.' What an age that woman on the other side was. One of those women who tell the neighbours' sins as well as their own; he reminded himself of the old mission joke. He was

tifling. Why did he have to feel so miserable and sick? Perhaps the whiskey on top of the gin.

Again he heard the murmur of the absolution and keyed himself for the moment when the shutter would be drawn back. When it was he found himself looking into the face of a young man, a boy almost. The priest inclined his head towards the grill without looking at him, and hurriedly John de Courcy explained that he was to be married in the morning and needed a certificate.

'Yes, oh yes,' the priest said, 'that will be all right. Now your Confession, my son.' He waited through the preliminaries, sighing, weary with the sins of Dublin.

'I was drunk twice, Father,' John de Courcy hurried, 'I missed Mass one Sunday.' He found himself being deliberately simple.

'Drunk, my son?' the priest said.

'Yes, Father.'

'Did you become insensible?'

'No, Father.'

'Did you lose control of yourself in any way, or do anything you wouldn't have done if you hadn't drink taken? Anything sinful, I mean.'

'I might have been a bit unsteady, Father,' he said, with pathetic jocularly.

'Being a bit unsteady is hardly a sin,' the young priest seemed to be smiling, 'I don't think you can have been really drunk, my son. Of course, missing Mass is serious, very serious. Anything else now?'

'No, Father,' he forced himself to say. And as he said it a feeling of hopeless wretchedness descended on him which he didn't even attempt to combat. The simple sincerity of the priest's face accused him. He felt he was doing something ineffably mean and pathetic in deceiving him. If only he could make a clean breast of everything, Vera, his lapse from faith, his neglect of the sacraments. But he couldn't. He couldn't. It was all crazy, insane. He shouldn't feel like this.

The priest sighed and paused. For a moment of panic John de Courcy was convinced that he had seen through the deception, until he said:

'You are to be married in the morning, my son?'

'Yes, Father.'

'Well, my son, remember that you are on the threshold of a very serious undertaking. Approach the Sacrament with a pure

heart and pure intentions and you will gain precious grace from it. You will have children, with the help of God. You will have a duty to them also, to bring them up in the fear and love of God. Your wife you will love, honour and cherish. Together you will do all in your power to make a good Catholic home. The institution of the family has God's especial blessing. . . .'

Slowly and earnestly he talked; but John de Courcy wasn't listening. He knelt there appalled at the weakness in himself in the face of something he had for years refused to contemplate. Where was his cultured agnosticism, his freedom from the superstitions of the vulgar? If it were really true that he didn't believe, he couldn't feel like this. And Martha, with her he'd never escape from it. She wouldn't be fooled by his little man in Whitefriars Street. Anyway his creation was dead; in his place sat this accusing innocent, a good ten years younger than he who called him 'my son' without incongruity. He felt himself on the threshold of a galling and endless imprisonment.

'Your penance will be five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys, my son. And now, the act of Contrition.' The priest began the absolution.

She'd want to know where he spent his evenings in town. She'd have the run of his books and as likely as not make a bonfire of his Rabelais, his Balzac, his Joyce, any he really cared for. Why hadn't he thought of that? And no way out. He could only get out of it now by taking a boat for the ends of the earth. Good God! he remembered suddenly, MacFarland is on the phone. Supposing Martha wanted something from town at the last moment and rang up to find he hadn't been there. Better ring MacFarland as soon as he got out.

'God bless you, my son,' the priest was saying.

He rose wearily, feeling listless and empty.

'Didn't you say that you wanted a certificate?' the priest asked.

'Oh, yes, Father,' he said shamefacedly.

'If you wait just a second now while I look for a pen. . . . Your name, my son?'

Perhaps he'd feel differently tomorrow. This had been a bad day, a wretched day. Tomorrow he'd be able to take stock of the situation properly. If he hadn't mixed his drinks he wouldn't have got into this state. That's what made him feel so off-colour. Yes, that was the cause of his breaking down without a doubt.

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